

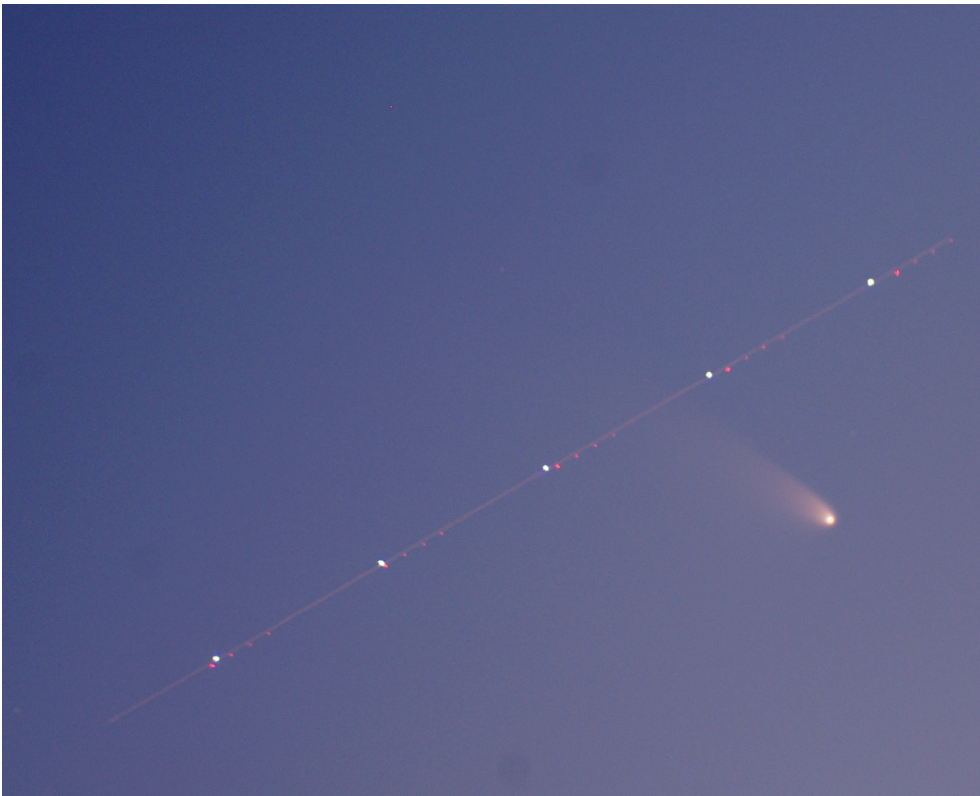
SUNlite

Shedding some light on UFOlogy and UFOs

One night at midnight I found myself in a police car racing toward a reported sighting... Finally several squad cars met at an intersection. Men spilled out and pointed excitedly at the sky. "See-there it is! It's moving!"

But it wasn't moving. "It" was the star Arcturus, undeniably identified by its position in relation to the handle of the Big dipper. A sobering demonstration for me.

J. Allen Hynek (Are flying saucer's real?
Saturday Evening Post December 17, 1966)



Cover: The star Arcturus is visible in this image. It has played a role in quite a few UFO reports I have read recently. One of these is listed in the 701 club.

Left: Comet Panstarrs and an IFO. A plane passed through the field of view during this photograph. This kind of lighting played a role in "The UFO evidence under review" article.

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If they were so easy to solve, why are they on so many lists?

It has been suggested, by some, that I am only explaining "easy" UFO cases in the 701 club/UFO evidence under review columns. I find that interesting because, if they were so easy, they should not appear on so many lists of "unknowns" created by UFOlogists. The only reason I started these columns in the first place had to do with people making outrageous claims about the number of unknowns in any database being somewhere between 20 and 50%! What I chose to demonstrate is that in all of these lists that UFOlogists and the USAF have compiled, there are plenty of cases that can be explained or have potential explanations. That makes the claims of a high percentage of unknowns in any collection of UFO reports highly suspect. It also indicates that many of these lists are padded with UFO cases that nobody bothered to look at closely.

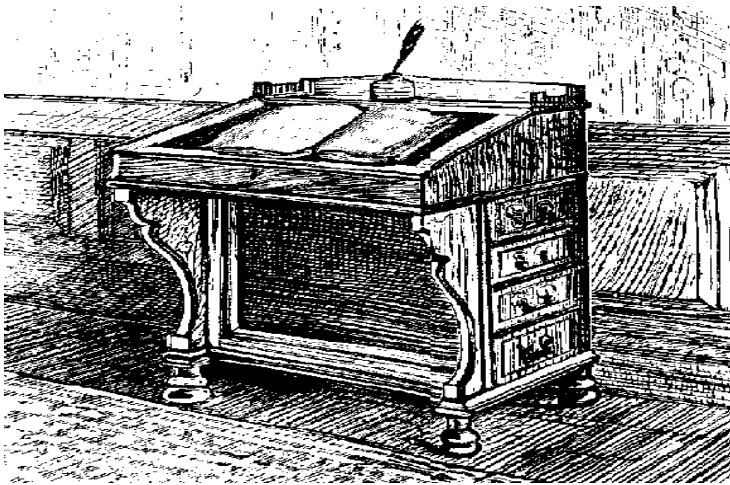
A few years ago, Paul Kimball produced a list of top UFO cases that "defied explanation" based on an opinion poll of UFOlogists. What was ignored by many who voted for these cases was that several of these "top cases" had been either satisfactorily explained or possible explanations offered for them that have not be falsified. One of the more recent explanations involved the 1996 Yukon "mothership" UFO. This was an event investigated and promoted by UFOlogists as a great case apparently because skeptics never bothered to offer an explanation. The actual explanation was recently discovered by Ted Molczan, who identified the source of the UFO report as the rocket booster from COSMOS 2335 re-entering the Earth's atmosphere (see SUNlite 4-4). Ignored by those presenting the case were the lessons of the past (Zond IV and other such cases) in favor of the more spectacular interpretation of what the witnesses thought they saw. I suspect that UFOlogists will eventually allow this case to quietly fade away as they realize their mistake. Don't worry, they will find another "great case" to fill the void.

What this means is that skeptics can't win even when they explain "difficult cases" or demonstrate that there are more likely explanations than alien spaceships. So, pardon me if I choose to select the cases that I do and not the ones UFOlogists THINK are "best evidence". The ball still remains in their court to prove that any of these cases are something unknown to science or are "somebody else's" craft. They have been shifting the burden of proof onto skeptics for over sixty years and it hasn't gotten them anywhere. All they can do is promote a bunch of mysteries they choose not to explain.

Speaking of "great UFO cases that defy explanation", IPACO released their report on the Trent photographs. This was another one of those "top cases" on Kimball's list. It was very informative and provided additional indications that the Trent photographs were probably fakes. While no thread was identified, there were the telltale indicators in the analysis that the object was smaller and closer to the camera than what UFOlogists have stated over the years. Will it join the ranks of the Petit-Rechain photograph or will those championing this case still insist that it is the "best evidence" of alien spaceships flying around the sky?

Who's blogging UFOs?

Hot topics and varied opinions



Robert Sheaffer ran a series of blog entries about his trip to the International UFO congress in Arizona. It is best to read his take on the subject:

<http://badufos.blogspot.com/2013/02/ufos-in-desert-part-1.html>

<http://badufos.blogspot.com/2013/02/ufos-in-desert-part-2.html>

<http://badufos.blogspot.com/2013/03/ufos-in-desert-part-3.html>

<http://badufos.blogspot.com/2013/03/ufos-in-desert-part-4.html>

<http://badufos.blogspot.com/2013/03/ufos-in-desert-part-5-final.html>

One item that caught my eye was John Rao driving around in an ATV with some low light security cameras to track UFOs. According to Robert, Rao zeroed in on an "orb" and was showing it to people. While Rao figured it was not a "true orb" because it was visible for too long, Robert noticed that it was pointed right at the star Epsilon Canis Majoris. When James McGaha showed Rao how to properly focus his camera, the "orb" became a pinpoint star! The lesson here is that just because a UFOlogist (for that matter any person) has a lot of sophisticated gear, does not mean they know how to operate it. Luckily, a pair of skeptics were there to set the record straight. Robert also says that he and James gave a real time astronomy observing session for all the attendees. Maybe those who spent some time with them learned something.

Another item had to do with Governor Symington's 1997 Arizona UFO sighting. James Fox was interviewed by Robert Sheaffer, who pointed out some issues that indicated Symington's story was more fabrication than a true account. Fox argued with him but, when Sheaffer pointed out the problems with Symington's claim that he saw all this on the news prior to his sighting, Fox chose to end the debate and remain convinced that Symington "knew what he saw". See more about this on page 6.

The Canadian government isn't going to investigate UFOs anymore. The funny thing about all this is that every time a government stops investigating UFOs, various individuals claim they should reveal what they know. It is obvious that these governments find such investigations a waste of their time/money and decide that it is far better to let all the civilian UFO groups investigate the reports. So far, these civilian organizations have had the same results. Not one case in the past sixty-plus years has been able to conclusively demonstrate that UFOs are something unknown to science.

The much anticipated Trent Photograph analysis I mentioned last issue has been released. Some of the major points made by the report are:

1. The UFO was closer to the camera than a distant wire. This makes its distance less than 200 feet from the camera (putting the upper limit of the UFO at 7 feet)
2. The wires in the Trent photos were hanging lower than when Life took their photographs (implying the wires were possibly lowered by the weight of the model).
3. The difference in angular size had basically to do with the pendulum motion of the model on a string. It had swung backwards 17 degrees, which shifted its position back 1.6 feet. This is consistent with a three foot long string suspending the model.
4. They figured the model was something very light so that it could be suspended by a simple thread. They suggested that it might have been a lamp shade or small lid of some kind.
5. The size of the model was probably about 6 inches across if suspended from the wires.

Does this mean the greatest UFO photographs ever taken are now considered a hoax? Probably not for those who have intensely defended these photographs for many decades but the analysis by IPACO (specifically Antoine Cousyn aka elevenaugust) might be convincing enough to sway those sitting on the fence. Of course, we still don't have the smoking gun. They still did not find a thread visible in the two photographs. I have a few ideas about that and discuss it starting on page 15.

Kevin Randle discussed a sighting that supposedly predated the Arnold sighting. It turns out that the story was not as promoted by various authors (including NICAP's UFO evidence document!). It seems everybody was referencing each other but never bothered to look up the original story. They even got the location wrong (it was Joliet, Illinois and not Cedar Rapids, Iowa). Randle even went so far as to suggest the story was made up by the witness. This may have been another case of a person stepping forward and saying "Me too". Randle suggests that the case should be stricken from the record. I second the motion.

Who's blogging UFOs? (Cont'd)

Michael Swords complained about how the internet has destroyed UFOlogical research. It seems that while there are a whole bunch of UFO reports being made to MUFON/NUFORC, he finds their quality very low. There seems to be little, if any, follow-up investigations on these cases. I used to read the UFO examiner, Robert Marsh, to see what were the most recent and interesting UFO reports. I found that many of them had potential explanations that were ignored or not reported. In some cases, the explanations were obvious but the case was still being presented as something extraordinary.

"Paranormal people" gave a listing of "cornerstone UFO cases". One of the cases was the Belgian wave. In that section, they described the Petit-Rechain photograph as being "largely dubbed the best UFO picture ever taken". Too bad they did not do their homework. The photographer admitted the whole thing was a hoax back in 2011! Their presentation of Rendlesham and the Arizona UFOs left a lot to be desired as they bought into the wild claims of Fife Symington and James Penniston. This listing simply parroted the stories on the internet they chose to accept with little or no research.

The Shropshire Star celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Cosford incident. I expected to read the usual UFO nonsense with plenty of quotes from people like Nick Pope and Leslie Kean. After initially laying out the proponent's case, the author then put the story in the proper perspective by giving the skeptic's explanation. I wonder if Nick Pope and Leslie Kean are going to whine about how the mainstream media has resorted to "debunking" this case.

Stephen Greer released his film, which promised the secrets of "free energy" and an alien body. This was another step in Greer's never ending effort to separate people from their money. When I first became interested in the subject of UFOlogy, several proponents pointed me towards Dr. Greer's effort to chase down UFOs. I could not believe this guy was seriously trying to lure UFOs to his location using lights and some form of mental telepathy. Some of the stories that came from his web site and organization were simply impossible to believe without evidence (which Greer never produces). Either Greer is somebody who has problems with reality or he is a very good con man. In either case, I would not believe anything he states without some solid evidence. For those who read this newsletter and donate money to Greer, I feel sorry for you and wish you would stop enabling him.

When Robert Sheaffer saw the film, he was unimpressed. As advertised it was more of the same Greer nonsense fed rapid fire to the viewer with little or no explanation. I am glad Robert watched the movie because I did not want to waste ten dollars of my money on this kind of nonsense. I am sure it will appear on the SYFY channel soon enough. Greer's alien body was "discovered" in 2003 and probably came into Greer's possession around 2009. It has been suggested that it was a few month old fetus or a monkey skeleton. The film apparently states it is the body of a small child that died at age 6-8 even though it is only six-inches long. It seems like an awfully small 6-8 year old! I agree with Robert that this seems about as likely as an actual alien body. Whatever it is, it is not proof of alien visitation.

Stanton Friedman repeated his standard complaint about skeptics in his response to Dr. Phil Plait's article "The Science of UFOs", which appeared in the April issue of Astronomy. Friedman cites his usual cherry picked/misleading statistics and then presented an uninformed argument about the Arizona UFO case. His knowledge of the actual event appears to be limited. He identifies ex-governor Symington as his primary witnesses that what was seen was some huge craft and not a formation of lights. I address Symington's highly suspect testimony on page 6. Not surprisingly, Friedman seems to have never examined the raw witness sightings that are in the NUFORC database. A majority of these reports, along with the one video taken of the 8-8:30 PM event, demonstrate there was no craft behind the formation of lights (see SUNlite 2-3). Not surprisingly, he ignores the observations of people like Mitch Stanley. This is another example of Friedman conducting research by proclamation. He finally suggests that Plait wrote the article as an April Fool's joke. The joke is on Friedman, who has promoted UFOs for over forty years and has failed to convince anybody outside of UFOlogy that UFOs are alien spaceships.

As a side note, I wanted to point out that I agreed with most of Plait's explanations in his article. However, I found his explanation for the Euclid, Ohio UFOs inaccurate. While Venus may have played a role, the more likely culprits were aircraft landing at Cleveland's airport (See SUNlite 2-3).

Speaking of Astronomy magazine, writer Glenn Chaple advises amateur astronomers to carefully observe unusual events in the sky in order to identify them. Chaple's description of his sightings pretty much mirrors my experiences with observing the night sky and seeing something unusual. It is easy for people to jump to the wrong conclusion about what they have seen when they allow their emotions/beliefs to take hold. The best way to identify what one sees is to carefully observe and record the observations of the event. If they are reasonably accurate, the source of the UFO should become apparent. He also echoed a statement that I, and many of my fellow amateur astronomers, have made in the past:

Despite thousands of hours of backyard astronomy, not to mention thousands more on camping trips and nighttime strolls, my lifetime UFO count is zip, zilch, zero!

Leslie Kean reported on April 12th, that General Bermudez of CEFAA had briefed her on a "fascinating, very strong case". The last time Bermudez made that claim, Kean found herself stuck with a bunch of bug videos she tried to pretend were not bugs. Let's see if she is a bit more skeptical this time. The way her post on facebook read, I don't think she has learned her lesson. Is Kean that gullible or does she realize that promoting UFO cases are her claim to fame?

Who's blogging UFOs? (Cont'd)

Nick Pope wrote an article for the NY Times regarding "Unidentified flying threats". He uses the Rendlesham and Cosford incidents as his main argument. Of course, these incidents have been adequately explained by skeptics. Therefore, his evidence is weak and invalid. In his final summation, he called for the USAF and/or NASA to investigate the subject of UFOs! I find the request a joke. The USAF and NASA have no interest in the subject because they have perceived no threat at all. Do either of these organizations want a repeat of Blue Book public relations fiasco? Do UFOlogists really want the USAF involved in UFOs again? Like NARCAP, Pope is trying an "end run" in a request for government funding to study UFOs. By creating a threat, they hope to gain some support for their personal interest in the subject. The fact remains that there are no KNOWN incidents where UFOs have caused a single airplane accident. If, as UFOlogists suggest every time they discuss the subject, UFOs are indeed "intelligently controlled highly-advanced craft", then they would pose no threat whatsoever to our archaic airplanes as they will easily avoid any collisions. They have done so for over 60 years. The only thing they appear to be unable to avoid is the ground!

Dr. David Clarke had an interesting follow-up story about Margaret Thatcher and Rendlesham. According to Georgina Bruni, Thatcher told her that she could not tell the people the story. This comment was made in a very brief exchange at a cocktail party, where Bruni asked Thatcher about UFOs and alien technology. Dr. Clarke reveals that Bruni appears to have taken the words out of context. Thatcher had told her to get the facts right and she could not tell the people. Apparently, what Thatcher meant was that Bruni could not tell the people wild stories that are not supported by the facts. This very important warning was apparently ignored by Bruni.

Another UFO Magazine is supposed to be appearing soon. It will be edited by Phillip Mantle and will have the "original" title of "UFO Today". The image on the UFO Iconoclast(s) blog appears to look very similar to USA today logo. I suspect it will be pretty much of the same stuff that appears on UFO blogs and discussion groups.

Steve Bassett is having another one of those national press club UFO presentations, which is occurring as this newsletter is being posted. To sweeten the pot, he will have FORMER members of congress performing a "mock" hearing on UFOs. One source states the event costs something like \$600,000 and these former congress people received \$20,000 each. Another source suggested that some of these politicians are so nutty and starved for cash, they would do just about anything for that money! On the other side of the table are a long list of various UFO speakers, who are also paid for their participation. I suppose that the former congress people are supposed to "grill" them and be skeptical. I doubt they will be very critical of what they hear and will not bite the hand that feeds them. BTW, if you want to watch the events unfold, you will have to pay to see it. I guess the truth is only for those willing to pay.

In my opinion, the \$600,000 (assuming this is an accurate value) was a true waste of money that could have been put to good use researching UFOs. This is why UFOlogy is not taken seriously by scientists and the media. The evidence is so poor that they have to resort to this kind of stunt instead of investing the money into a project that might produce results.

Looking at the list of UFO proponents that were appearing reminded me of the 1968 "symposium on UFOs". However, the 1968 event did not include such fringe promoters like Stephen Greer and Linda Moulton Howe. Many of the individuals in 1968 were accomplished scientists. Major Quintanilla, writing in his unpublished memoir "UFOs an Air Force dilemma", made the following comment regarding those proceedings:

I've never seen such a stacked deck in all of my life and the statements and papers presented by these learned gentlemen of science proved the point. Not one of them presented anything significant, or a plan which was worthwhile in pursuing. These high-brow doctors with all their university rhetoric fell flat on their asses and all their high sounding verbiage barely cause a ripple.

One of the speakers at the symposium was Carl Sagan, who was the only presenter who demonstrated any skepticism on the subject. He would state:

I might mention that, on this symposium, there are no individuals who strongly disbelieve in the extraterrestrial origin of UFO's and therefore there is a certain view, not necessarily one I strongly agree with -- but there is a certain view this committee is not hearing today, along those lines.

One can easily apply these statements to what happened in 1968 to what probably will happen in this recent exercise in futility for UFOlogy. Presenting one point of view is an accomplished art employed in advertising and politics. It seems that the organizers are afraid of opposing opinions/views. As I have noted in the past, these little dog and pony shows are more about the people involved getting attention from the media and not to provide anything new or substantial about the subject. After the whole event is over, I suspect that UFOlogists will pat themselves on the back for the publicity but the world outside the UFO community will say "so what?" and continue to poke fun at the subject. Will Steve Bassett, as well as all the other speakers, call this "mission accomplished"?

The Roswell Corner

Not even the president of the United States could get into the place

This was a quote given in the media by an official, who was describing the crash site of a B-29 on April 11, 1950. The B-29 had an atomic weapon on board but the nuclear capsule was not installed for safety purposes. However, the casing of the bomb was damaged and the high explosives in it detonated from the fire/crash. As one might expect, there was much concern for security and the recovery of the nuclear materials (including the spare detonators on board the plane). A road block was erected preventing any access to the crash site. Interestingly, the plane was attached to the 509th bomb group out of Roswell.

There are some similarities between this and the descriptions of the Roswell incident. The blocking off of roads and high security in the recovery operation are comparable. Could it be possible that some of the individuals, who describe the Roswell event are confusing it with this one? It seems plausible that, decades later, some might recall being transported a long distance to some unfamiliar location to help recover bodies/pick up debris under tight security as being part of an alien spaceship recovery operation. A bigger point here is that, despite the secrecy involved, the media was fully aware of the event and the military's effort to recover the debris. Compare this to the Roswell event, where dozens of vehicles would be required to go through the town of Roswell for several days to get personnel to/from the crash site and retrieve the debris. While the actual crash of the alien spaceship could go unwitnessed, the military's sudden mass movement through town up Route 285 could not go unnoticed by the local media and populace. Strangely, not one word is uttered in the press about some sort of major military operation north of Roswell, which included security road blocks visible from the highway. The local press in Roswell, and elsewhere, appeared oblivious to all of it. It wasn't until Mack Brazel came into town did it suddenly become newsworthy. This appears to have been the case with Jesse Marcel Sr. as well. He mentioned no such recovery operations in any interviews and only became aware of a possible crash when he got that infamous phone call from town. It seems highly unlikely that such activity would have gone unnoticed and unreported in 1947.

Bragalia and more JARS

Anthony Bragalia wrote another one of those pieces that describe "Just another Roswell story (JARS)". This involved some photo lab technician (PFC Calvin Cox) who was ordered to guard the hanger. He was directed to "shoot to kill" anybody who went inside the hanger. I wonder if he took those orders seriously since he decided to ignore those orders and looked inside anyway. Of course, he saw all sorts of debris. I really don't find the story very credible since none of it can be verified in any way other than the individual was a PFC at the photo lab. Did they really need to go to the photo lab to find guards for the debris? I guess the next step would be to get the cooks involved.

BTW, in all of these interviews that are being done, I wonder if each and every interview is documented. How many are telling JARS and how many tell the story that they saw or knew nothing? A breakdown of ranks might also be interesting to see. I am also waiting for one of the people interviewed to openly admit they were part of the goon squad that threatened people. Of course, nobody wants to say they were the bad guy. Instead, they all want to be the "good guys". It is amazing that the a secret that was kept for at least thirty years was obvious to anybody who happened to be on base.

Inaccurate news reports

I was struck by the stories that were circulated in the first few hours after the Boston Marathon explosions and their comparison to what really happened. While the major facts of the story were accurate, all sorts of details were reported within the first 24 hours that were not accurate as various news reporters/agencies wanted to be the first to report this or that. Compare this to Roswell, where details contradicted each other and it was not until the press conference in Fort Worth, did the facts become clear. Of course, conspiracy theorists/crashologists think otherwise. It seems more probable that these contradictory reports had more to do with various news agencies getting the wrong information on a developing story than being evidence of a cover-up.



After sixteen years, who can you trust?

On March 13th, the annual reposting of the same old UFO stories regarding “The Phoenix Lights” appeared on the web. For some reason, Mitch Stanley is never mentioned in any of these writings. My web site on the subject and an article that appeared in SUNlite 2-3 also seems to have been missed. I am simply amazed that people simply regurgitate these stories without even looking at the facts behind many of them.

The facts

These are the FACTS (things that are not in dispute) regarding the case:

1. Between 8:00 and 8:45 PM local time, witnesses reported an unidentified formation of lights or lighted object traversing the state of Arizona, starting in the northwest and disappearing near Tuscon.
2. Witness’ descriptions varied between a massive dark shape behind the lights to a formation of individual lights that was not attached to any craft.
3. Mitch Stanley and Rich Contry reported seeing these lights through a telescope (Stanley) and binoculars (Contry). Both identified the lights as being aircraft in formation.
4. The only video of the event, taken by Terry Proctor, shows a formation of lights that shifted position significantly in forty-three seconds.
5. The NUFORC database reveals that only about a third of the witnesses, who made reports in 1997, reported seeing a dark object behind the lights. The rest report a formation of lights.
6. The flight path of the lights followed a standard air route taken by aircraft flying from Las Vegas to Tuscon.
7. The 10 PM videos were unrelated to the 8-8:45PM event.
8. The analyses of the 10 PM videos have shown that the lights were, more than likely, flares dropped by the Maryland Air National Guard, which was flying in the area at the time the videos were recorded. Their pilots stated they had ejected flares at a high altitude.

These are the facts. Most of the stories (including the reports by Stanley and Contry) are just reports that are open to interpretation. Filing a UFO report is a fact. However, the details in these reports are not facts but what the witness perceived as facts. We are left trying to determine which reports accurately reported what happened and which reports were inaccurate.

While I discussed the entire case in SUNlite 2-3, there are two stories that have been promoted for some time that I chose to ignore simply because I found them unreliable. Since they continue to be promoted by various UFO web sites, I felt a need to address them.

What a tangled web.....

Years after the events of March 13, 1997, Governor Fife Symington revealed that he knew a lot more about the event than he led everyone to believe. In this new version of UFO history, he stated that his office tried to get to the bottom of the events shortly after this occurred. However, there seems to be no evidence to support this claim. Such an investigation would be documented with letters to various agencies and requests for information. The only document appears to be senator McCain requesting the USAF investigate. But this was in May at the request of Emma Barwood, who did go public in 1997 requesting information about the event. Why didn’t Symington’s investigation contact the powerful senator? Not happy with trying to rewrite this part of history, Symington added another twist.

In this revision of history, Symington plays an active role in seeing the UFO. He recounted the exact details of the sighting on at least two occasions. The first was on Larry King:

Well, I acknowledge that I saw a craft. I was up in the sunny slope area around 8:00 at night. And I went out to look to the west where the -- all the news channels were filming the Phoenix Lights. And to my astonishment this large sort of delta-shaped, wedge-shaped, craft moved silently over the valley, over Squall Peak, dramatically large, very distinctive leading edge with some enormous lights. And it just went on down to the Southeast Valley. And I was absolutely stunned because I was turning to the west looking for the distant Phoenix Lights and all of a sudden this apparition appears.... I think it was from another world. I’ve never seen anything like it, Larry. It was enormous. It’s unlike anything I’ve ever seen. And, you know, it was all over the news. Hundreds, if not thousands of people saw it.¹

This seems to be a confusing account. It is a fact that no news channels were filming “The Phoenix Lights” at 8 PM or 10 PM. These videos came from amateurs all over the region at 10 PM and the media was not out filming anything. As I stated above, there is only one known video of the 8PM event and it was not shot near Squaw Peak.

Symington elaborated on his story in the program “UFOs on the record”:

On March 13th, I was having dinner with my family and we had the TV on and I was well aware of the news about the UFO. So, I said, I am going to jump in my car and I am going to go down Lincoln drive past squaw peak and see if I can see what is going on. When I got here

*there were people milling around just enjoying the park. I was here for probably five or ten minute and somebody said "look at that...look at that... Out to the northwest was this great big massive craft....."*²

What he seems to be stating is that, while he was eating his dinner, the local news broke into the regular broadcast alerting everyone that a UFO was headed towards or visible over Phoenix. This is a false story. There were no news reports/alerts on television or radio that night. All the witnesses who told their stories over the years never mentioned any such alerts or newscasts. They were surprised by the appearance of the lights. Other than a few television reports that night, the media seemed to demonstrate indifference to the event. From what I have been able to determine, there really was no mention of the event in the Arizona Republic until the 18th of March and, even then, it only appeared in the "B" section of the paper (see below)!

Object seen over state a puzzle — was it UFO?

By Susie Steckner
The Arizona Republic

The first call reportedly came from a former police officer, who spotted the strange cluster of lights moving very quickly across the night sky near Paulden, north of Prescott in Yavapai County.

The bright red-orange lights formed the shape of a boomerang, he said, with a larger grouping in the lead followed by a single light.

Reports poured in Thursday to Luke Air Force Base, the National Weather Service and the National UFO Reporting Center in Seattle, which logged the call from the unidentified former officer.

Four days later, there is no clear

explanation for the object, described as both a triangle and a straight line, and varying from bright red to white to bluish white.

"We are confused about the exact details, but make no mistake about it," said Peter Davenport, director of the Seattle UFO center, "there was a dramatic event that took place in Arizona that night."

The National Weather Service can't offer any answers. Same goes for the officials at Luke.

"We just know it was not one of our planes," Lt. Col. Mike Hauser said.

"Everybody is telling me that we have UFOs stashed all over the Air

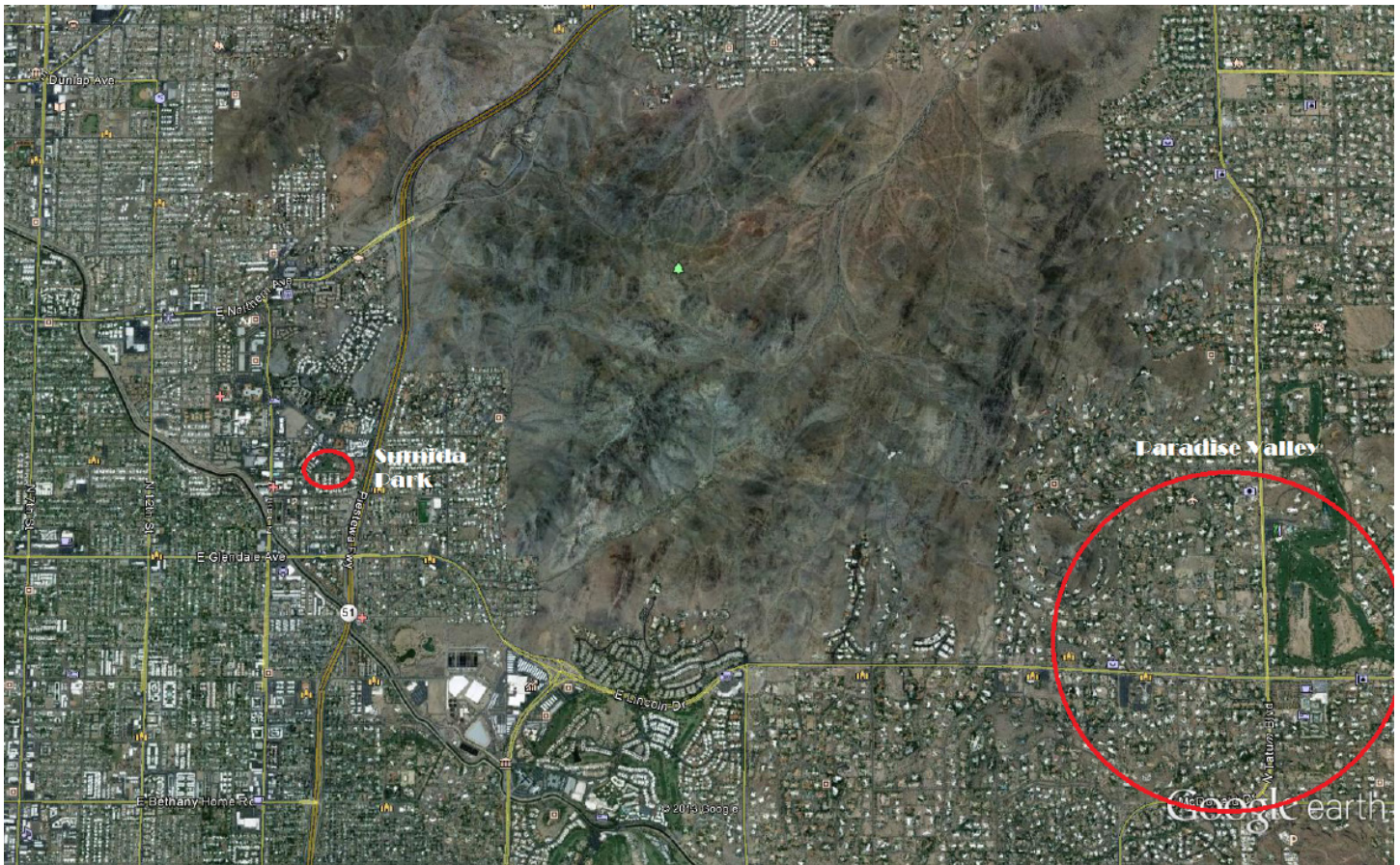
— See **OBJECT**, page B2

It was not until June, when USA today ran the story on its front page, that the event became important news outside of the UFO community. After this, the story took on national importance and Fife Symington decided to stage his press conference complete with a fake alien. The same UFOlogists, who cheer Symington today were not amused about this stunt in 1997.



This is the man, who would later state that he saw the alien spaceship. Is he really that trustworthy? Are UFOlogists really this gullible?

Returning to March 13th, we discover that the governor was "a man of action". At the moment of hearing these stories on the television, Symington decided to jump into his car (without a still/video camera or anybody in the family!), leave his home in Paradise Valley, and drive five to ten minutes west to a little park in Phoenix to do some UFO gazing. He did not call the local police or any of the news outlets to join him personally. It was like taking a quick trip to the corner store. After driving the distance to this isolated park, he waited an additional five to ten minutes for the UFO to appear. According to Robert Sheaffer, who discussed this with James Fox, this sighting occurred at 8:20 PM. If we work backwards to Symington being alerted, he would have to have heard the news between 8 and 8:10 PM. I wonder if they broke into and interrupted the NCAA basketball game that night? That certainly would have been headlines in sports history. One wonders why the Governor was not interested in watching the Arizona state team play in the first round regional game (which was slated for prime time in Arizona). According to Peter Davenport, he did not even receive the first reports at the National UFO Reporting Center until 8:16 PM. It seems likely that this may have been about the



The governor lived in Paradise valley. I could not pinpoint his exact location but he describes driving west on Lincoln Dr. One wonders why he chose Sumida Park, which is sort of off the beaten path, for watching UFOs. time that other agencies (FAA, radio, news stations, police, etc) were called. Is the ex-governor lying or simply mistaken about the timing in his story?

Finally, I am not even sure the governor could just take off and drive about town on his own without some sort of security or notification of his security. Does anybody have any proof that the Governor was even home that evening or went out? If the governor of any state was present at a UFO sighting, with a large number of people, the others would remember it and make sure the media knew about it. Yet, in 1997, all these people in Sumida park, did not even recognize the fact that the governor was present and saw what they saw. More interestingly, I am unaware of a single UFO report being filed from this location with MUFON or NUFORC. It is possible that no reports were filed or those reports were never published. All we have is the word of one person, who has been known to be less than honest with the public, that this event happened as he described. What a convenient way to get back into the public eye by stating "me too" to UFO aficionados, who are more than willing to accept these kinds of stories. To them, Symington can sound awful convincing. Don't politicians learn to act convincing, sincere, and honest in order to get votes from uncritical voters?

Pilots are highly reliable...aren't they?

The other story repeated this last March, was the story of Trig Johnston, an airline pilot with over 12,000 hours of flight time. As a result, he is considered an unimpeachable witness by UFO proponents. His story is not really new. I was aware of his name being mentioned back in 1997. To the best of my knowledge, his story first appeared in 2006:

Airline pilots are accustomed to noting the time. Time off the block's, time off the ground, the time over navigational fixes particularly over the ocean. Then there is the all important estimated time of arrival, the time on the ground and the time on the blocks where we turn off the seat belt sign. And the time the crew bus leaves in relation to those times. Son Logan was making a racket outside in our drive way. When I stepped outside to investigate, the time in Scottsdale Arizona on March 13th, 1997 was 22:20.³

I do not doubt that Johnston feels he is being accurate in telling his story but there is one big flaw with his tale. He states this all happened at 22:20 local time. This is two hours AFTER the actual event. Did Johnston make a mistake on the time even though he is sure of it? Did Johnston see a completely different event that others did not see? Is it possible he is confusing the events of the flares with his own observations?

Logan's friends, Ryan and Jenny, were helping with the project that consisted of constructing massive, rustic gates for our acre horse property. He was using a sledge hammer to force timbers onto steel rods. Ryan asked, "What the hell is that?" Ryan had to be the only person on earth who hadn't known of the Hale Bop comet.⁴

Were Johnston's son and his friends really out at 10:20 PM on a school night performing this task as he claims? Perhaps his time

really is a bit off despite what he proclaims.

I turned, prepared to deliver a lecture on comet's, but stopped short. "Uh, we're in for an air show." I said. My initial impression was that of a formation of C-130's displaying some new type of tactical lighting. But you feel a C-130's powerful Allison engines before you hear it or see it. We felt nothing. It was quiet. Real quiet, and it stayed that way.

The huge mass – at least a mile wide – approached from the North West. I could land on it with my 727. We began to eliminate possibilities. What ever it was seemed to be following the Tonto One arrival, the standard jet arrival routing for instrument traffic into PHX on an approximate heading of 120°. I estimated its altitude to be 10,000 feet.⁵

His observation, if accurate, tends to confirm what I have stated all along regarding the Arizona event. That being the lights were at high altitude and flying along a standard air route.

No C-130's, it wasn't a formation of jets – too slow for either of them. Helicopters? Not that either – no "wop-wop," no sound. None. Cessna's wired with weird lights? Its happened, but that wasn't the case on March 13th.⁶

It is amusing he dismissed the formation of aircraft or helicopters because they were too slow and there was no sound. Yet, he admits his own altitude estimates were 10,000 feet. Helicopters might not be heard at this distance and jets flying at a cruising speed of a few hundred miles per hour at 10,000 feet or more would move at a slow angular rate and also might not be heard.

After a few minutes of observation we concluded that this was one object. There was zero movement between its massive forward-facing amber lights. I should have counted the lights, should have run for a camera and called my friend Bob Mohan, a local talk radio guy. The craft had intercepted Scottsdale Road, and made a right turn to approximately 180° following it south. It was headed right for Mo's house.

WHY didn't I call Mohan, run for a camera or any of those other questions people always ask? Because I expected it to disappear at any moment. None of us were frightened, excited or otherwise disturbed. But we couldn't take our eyes off of it. What I saw bears little relation to the video of the "Phoenix Lights." And yes, there are a couple of fruit loops associated with March 13th. Anyone who can tell you what the little green men wish for us can probably also tell you where God wants you to send your checks. But, that's just my opinion.

I estimate it passed 90° to our position, roughly at the intersection of Scottsdale road and Shea Boulevard, a couple of miles away, at 22:30. We could no longer see the top of it – the lights we had been watching were blocked out by the structure. As it passed the 90° position, I thought I perceived a rounded, almost gondola shaped – what? – what DO you call a semi-transparent thing on the bottom of a craft whose top might have been 10,000 feet in height? What ever you call it, it was nearly dragging the ground. Keep in mind there was nothing available to compare with – and from our position it was quite dark. I've heard it said that it was like looking through water. Yeah. Like a thin curtain of water. Lights on the other side, some city, mostly stars lost some of their brilliance and appeared mildly wavy as the craft passed between us and them. To me, the machine seemed to be an array of amber lights suspended in floating ink surrounded by the dark of night.⁷

His observations of the "craft" appear to reflect observations of lights but nothing more than that. Notice how his observations indicate a "semi-transparent" effect. Several other witnesses from 1997 used this description. I would not be surprised if this affected his memory of the event. What this indicates is that he never really saw a craft attached to the lights and was fooled by the "airship effect" mentioned in SUNlite 2-3.

I was also disappointed in Johnston's descriptions. His estimates of size and speed did not involve angular measurements of any kind. Despite the claim that he was a pilot, I found his abilities to accurately describe what happened lacking. How could a man claim he is very attentive to such details because of his profession omit the important facts regarding the sighting? I guess Mr. Johnston's attitude is best expressed by this statement:

The SR-71 flew in 1958 before they had any real money to play with... When did the Stealth Bomber fly? Remember, they shot JFK in front of God and everyone and got away with it. Fried some folks at Waco, but deny it to this day. Do you believe that TWA 800 was brought down by a faulty boost pump? Do you really believe the "9-11" story?⁸

Just to set the record straight, the SR-71 did not fly in 1958. The initial design, the A-12, was actually first test flown on April 25, 1962. The rest of this conspiracy minded diatribe demonstrates that Johnston has allowed his personal beliefs to affect his interpretation of the event that he may or may not have witnessed. UFO witnesses have been using the line, "I know what I saw", for over sixty years and, in many cases, they have been proven to be inaccurate in their reports/observations. The phrase should actually be "I know what I think (or believe) I saw". This has happened to pilots, police officers, soldiers, sailors, airmen, politicians, lawyers, and a host of many other professions. Why is his report any different?

Since we are reporting pilot observations of the events that night, I would like to add this one from the NUFORC database that was written about the same event in 1999:

I am a pilot with one of the major carriers here in the valley and I live in the South Mountain area. On that night I was on my way to work and traveling north along interstate 10 at approximately 8:15 PM. The lights first appeared to me to be over the airport in a wide formation and traveling in a southerly direction, roughly over the interstate. There is no question that they were anomalous, they got my attention immediately, and I was concerned enough about distractedly weaving into other traffic while observing them, that I pulled off the interstate to watch them go overhead. Where my account seems to differ from the accounts of other witnesses is that I perceived the

lights to be individual objects, five in all, traveling in a roughly triangular formation. As they passed overhead, I took note of a particularly bright star and noted that the star was never obscured by any solid object as the lights passed it. When the lights were directly overhead, they appeared to be comprised of two lights per object, the bright light in the direction of motion and a much fainter light immediately behind it. There was no variation in the color of the lights and no blinking or twinkling. It was very difficult to judge the altitude of the objects, as they were never more than pinpoints of light moving very slowly; if I had to guess, I would say they were at very high altitude. I know this is at odds with some of the more dramatic reports of a gigantic dark object, but I am certain that I am not mistaken. Being a pilot, I am a trained observer of lighted airborne objects and, while these lights were indeed strange, there is no doubt in my mind that they were individual objects and not the running lights on some single large object. (Reported July 13, 1999)⁹

Why is this report, which dismisses the idea of a huge UFO attached to the lights, any less accurate than Mr. Johnston's? Why is it ignored?

Legends and Myths

What these two stories demonstrate is that the Arizona UFO event will never be explained to the full satisfaction of those who claim to have seen them or those promoting the case. Stories, like these, told years later are difficult to verify and are easily influenced by the testimonies told years before. They may be reasonably accurate, they may be inaccurate memories influenced by various UFO shows, or they may have been made up by the individual for their own personal agenda. Promoting such stories taints the actual observations by ALL the witnesses in 1997 and clouds the issue. It is less about establishing facts and more about creating myths and legends.

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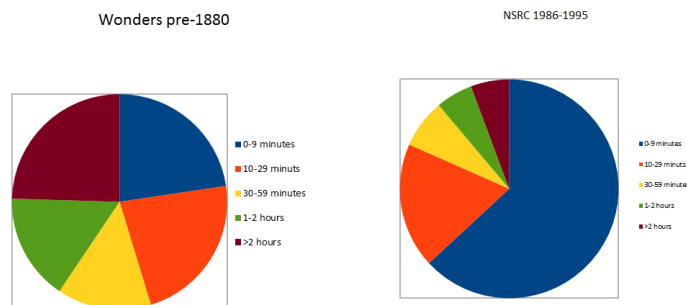
BUILD ME A TEMPLE

By Martin S. Kottmeyer

The comparative study of religions is sometimes divided into two opposing schools of thought. The perennialists suggest all religions share a common core of similar concerns and reflect a common drive found in all humanity. Constructivists are more impressed by the vast diversity of materials that religions bury us with, their conflicting beliefs, and emphasize how religions are shaped by environment, history, culture, and the personalities of their founders. Aubeck & Vallee's Wonders in the Sky is at heart a perennialist work when it asserts there is a core ufo phenomenon which is a constant across time and culture. They are not blind to the differences and idiosyncrasies one finds in ufo experiences of other times and other places, but downplay them as surface veneers in the hope that it is the underlying similarities that will ultimately prove most important. I'm not immune from this temptation as will shortly become apparent, but I tend to worry how perennialists often read meanings weighted with contemporary agendas into ancient materials that scholars with broader and deeper knowledge of original contexts show are often illusory. I also worry when they miss more substantial commonalities as they obsess over things of little consequence. Such obsessions cast troubling shadows over the whole perennialist enterprise.

I recently was confronted with the dichotomy of these approaches when reading a fascinating little essay in an academic work about religions which unexpectedly described a rather surprising cultural variation on the ufo phenomenon. The essay by Raoul Birnbaum is titled "Light in the Wutai Mountains" and centers upon a complex of mountains in northern China renown for uncanny phenomena and Buddhist visions of a celestial figure known sometimes by the name Wenshu pusa. Written accounts span at least nine centuries and constitute a very large body of narratives. Some of the material would clearly be embraced by ufo buffs as part of their domain of study. Radiant nighttime lights; sometimes white, sometimes multi-colored appear from time to time and with sufficient frequency that pilgrims come to expect them. Various called Buddha lights or wisdom lamps they can behave a variety of ways: hovering, flying up and down, moving stately and unhurriedly like a well-fed fish, splitting into other balls of varying sizes, flitting about like butterflies. In one instance numerous fireballs fill the sky making the sky ablaze with light. Some seem shapeless and amorphous; others precisely layered in a thousand hues. This last class of fireballs shades into Buddhist traditions that find meaning in luminous and multi-hued clouds. Other experiences that have lights transform into flying buddhas might be mildly annoying to ufologists, but would be written off as that surface cultural veneer by Westerners. Buddhists might roll their eyes, but science must be served. The strand of Buddhist thought that feels a need to report sightings of 'auspicious birds' like white cranes as important signifiers of people possessing power would also likely be regarded as the superstitious noise of culture masking the signal of scientific mystery. We'll have to throw them out. Better still, ridicule them. Birds meaningful? – ha, ha, ha.

How much of this truly reflects a constant core ufo phenomenon will bother a constructivist. One could clearly pick and choose individual cases from the modern ufo phenomenon that would match fairly exactly the nocturnal lights and daylight disks seen in the Wutai database, but both populations have cases presenting wide ranges of properties. Readers of Allan Hendry's UFO Handbook will also have cause to note that IFOs present wide ranges of properties, too, and one can match behaviors to explained cases as easily as to those still unexplained. Wutai experiences sometimes include things like sudden smells of fragrant incense and the tolling of invisible chimes. That seems rather too distinctly Eastern to expect much the same in modern Western cases. And whether things taken en masse would show constancy seems pretty doubtful to me. That unhurried stately well-fed fish light does not seem especially modern and I was reminded that when I compared Aubeck & Vallee's chart of the duration of ancient ufos to a chart of modern ufo reports, the ancient cases have a distinct poverty of the quick and hurried events that make such a large slice of modern cases:



Paul Feughelli charted durations for 1415 cases between 1986-1995 and this population shows a distribution that skews heavily to short durations. 325 of the cases last under a minute. 900 last under ten minutes – 63.6%. Aubeck & Vallee's ancient cases population had only 22.6% lasting under ten minutes - barely a third as many by percentage.

The Wutai variation of the ufo phenomenon gets more interesting when you get down to the close encounters of the 3rd kind. In

the year 679 18 monks follow a flock of cranes for several leagues till they disappear, replaced by an auspicious cloud of 5 colors. They then see an auspicious multi-colored light shaped like a Buddha image. It was 30 feet high and when the monks moved, the light moved with them. The monks prostrated themselves before it 20 times till finally it disappeared. Monk Lingzhi described it as a light like the sun, "composed of hundreds of thousands of different colors, each layer distinct from the others." The misty light had an ineffable quality and their hearts and souls were unsettled by it. These experiencers were prominent figures in the monastic life of the period. Birnbaum correctly remarks, "That these strange experiences were reported by such a man and members of his party gives the report credibility within the circles of this text's readership." It is clearly miraculous in character and a part of the Wutai cultural narrative of ufos as they understand it.



It is surely impressive as all get-out, but does it tell us anything useful about any core ufo phenomenon? Clearly no grays nor Nordics here, nor anything profoundly reminiscent of abduction or contact experiences. We could point to brilliant multi-colored light inside some saucers like those of Angelucci's and Adamski's tales as vaguely suggestive of parallelism, but this is ultimately abstract and attributable to a structural component of expressions of goodness in mythology. Syllogistically that demands a psychological origin, yet I haven't forgotten the wrinkle. Eighteen men sharing the same miraculous, seemingly impossible, vision of a 30 foot tall radiating Buddha! Strangely objective for a mental phenomenon.



Narratives of a similar nature follow repeatedly in subsequent dynasties. Worthy monks see lights characteristic of the Wutai region and bright shining humanlike beings; sometimes from a distance, sometimes close enough for conversations. They grow in complexity and come to include visits to buildings made of gold or silver light. Often they must cross a shining bridge guided by a young man. Inside is Wenshu pusa, a celestial figure of Buddhist tradition accompanied by a retinue of sages. After a time, we finally come to the tale of a monk called Oxcloud. Oxcloud was regarded as a simpleton in his youth. His family sent him to a monastery, but had great trouble when it came to memorizing scriptures and liturgies. It was a torment and in his 36th year, he took it upon himself to seek a miracle from Wenshu and ask him for intelligence. In the mountains he finds an old man in due course and after some conversational back and forth the old man declares that Oxcloud had been an ox in a previous life and this was the cause of his dim-wittedness. "Bring me a mattock from behind the Dragon Hall and I will chop off that silted-up flesh on your heart and head and make you bright and keen." Oxcloud does as instructed, then closes his eyes. "He felt then as if his very heart were cut, but his body experienced no pain or suffering. His mind then cleared: it was like encountering a bright lamp in a darkened room, as if the sun and moon were disclosed to the dark night. The old man transforms into a more familiar form of Wenshu. Then he vanishes. The monk goes back down the mountain and resumes his life greatly improved. The following year a ray of straight light

appears from the mountain he met Wenshu on before showing him a manifestation of a pavilion from which radiant colors flamed and glittered. A signboard reads "Pavilion of Stability." He takes this as a direction to build a pavilion in the spot the light had landed. "Because the transformations of the way ordained it to be so, the people united to donate their valuables."

Birnbaum notes that monasteries founded on the basis of radiant visions like this happened on multiple occasions. Records indicate that such complexes were often funded by members of the imperial family and high officials "usually at tremendous expense." The visionary typically became abbot and would show loyalty with prayers honoring and benefitting the imperial family. Birnbaum adds the delightful comment, "One can imagine that reports of such visions were both exciting and highly problematic for all concerned."

A perennialist would almost certainly read the Oxcloud tale and gush about the presence of the heart operation reminding them of no less than 3 other abduction experiences: Brian Scott of Garden Grove, California, October 8, 1975: "I think my heart left my body."; Karin, August 14, 1996 in John Mack's *Passport to the Cosmos*; and a subject hypnotized at the 1975 Fort Smith conference. (October 17-19, 1975). I read it and pondered a pattern most perennialists would miss.

What is it with celestial beings always wanting temples?

Think back to that piece I wrote about Akhenaten a few months back. The voice in the Solar Disc wants "a monument with an eternal and everlasting name" so he has a religious mecca built in the desert – ultimately a folly quickly abandoned when Akhenaten died.

Most ufologists know Ezekiel only for his famous vision in the sky of wheels within wheels, an obvious alien spaceship thinks most of them. Even Aubeck & Vallee's entry on Ezekiel - #4 in their ancient ufos chronology - fail to continue on to notice that the Lord directs Ezekiel to build a clay model of Jerusalem in chapter 4. Better, later, beginning in Chapter 40, there is an incredibly boring vision of a brassman giving the detailed plans for a sacred city to be named Jehovah-Shammah [meaning "The Lord is There"] with one chapter giving detailed measurements for a temple. This New Jerusalem was not built. Some prophesy it will be someday. It should not be confused with the New Jerusalem of Revelations which would be three orders of magnitude larger.

Visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary routinely include an explicit request to have a shrine or chapel built, usually at the site of the apparition. (Zimdars-Swartz 1991) In the Fatima series of apparitions, the salient direction is attributed to the Lady in the apparition of September 13, 1917. It was revealed during the questioning of Lucia by Rev. Dr. Formigao on September 27th.

"What did the Lady say was to be done with the money which the people left under the oak tree in the Cova da Iria?"

"She said that we were to make two andores and that I and Jacinta and two more girls were to carry one, and Francisco with three more boys the other, to the parish church. Part of this money was to be for the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary and the rest to help to build a new chapel."

"Where does the Lady want the chapel built? In the Cova da Iria?"

"I don't know; she didn't say."

This apparition has been pointed to by ufologists as having a solid ufo component. We quote from the 1932 Letter of Monsignor João Quaresma:

"With great astonishment I saw, clearly and distinctly, a luminous globe, which moved from the east to the west, gliding slowly and majestically through space. My friend also looked, and had the good fortune to enjoy the same unexpected and delightful vision. Suddenly the globe, with its extraordinary light, disappeared. Near us was a little girl dressed like Lucia, and more or less the same age. She continued to cry out happily: 'I still see it! I still see it! Now it's coming down...!' After a few minutes, about the duration of the apparitions, the child began to exclaim again, pointing to the sky: 'Now it's going up again!'---and she followed the globe with her eyes until it disappeared in the direction of the sun. 'What do you think of that globe?' I asked my companion, who seemed enthusiastic at what he had seen. 'That it was our Lady,' he replied without hesitation."

We will only briefly mention that Lourdes is famous for its miracle cures at a shrine that was directed to be built during a vision experienced by Bernadette Soubirous on March 2, 1858. The Our Lady of Guadalupe involved an Aztec Indian named Juan Diego who on December 9, 1531 saw a young Mexican girl surrounded by a golden beam of light who directs a chapel be built where there had once been a temple to the Aztec Mother Goddess.(McClure 1983)

As you might guess, I see this temple building impulse continued in modern ufo history. Among the contactees of the Fifties, George van Tassel was famous for constructing a building known as the Integratron. This building was a product of a visit he received from a Venusian named Solgonda and later telepathic channelings with a Venusian Council. A website devoted to telling its history states, "In his many hundred radio and TV appearances, George Van Tassel compared the Integratron to the Tabernacle of Moses. George claimed he was instructed by a higher intelligence to build a 21st century version of the Tabernacle that Moses constructed, using the same positive power principle of the Great Pyramid of Giza. He was given the name The Integratron and said he was told it would revitalize and rejuvenate the physical bodies of humankind." Construction started in 1957 and was funded by donations and speaking engagements involving the nonprofit Ministry of Universal Wisdom. Progress was slow and by 1975 he estimated it was 88% complete. Family members confess the project for building it was a hard grind and a constant drain of finances with van Tassel even suffering malnutrition in the attempt to keep things running. In 1978, he died and the plans for completion went missing. The building still stands, seekers still visit it, and there are ongoing efforts to keep it in good order.(Curran 2001)



Brian Scott, #40 in Bullard's listing of the Top 50 abductions, was tasked by Voltar to build a Pyramid at Tiahuanaco during an encounter in the desert on June 22, 1976. He is shown an image of a futuristic-looking pyramid of copper and silver decorated by red stripes inlaid with gold. He's directed, "Resurrect the Pyramid of Life and Wisdom. Rebuild and complete construction in your time prior to 2011 A.D." Brian journeys to Peru and Tiahuanaco to transform himself in preparation. In the process he elaborates that the pyramid would be built atop an existing inverted pyramid. It would be solar-powered and would constitute a doorway to connecting us with the aliens. The extraterrestrials would combine their storehouse of knowledge to ours. He starts talking grandiosely of a Los Alamos type center and a city of 25,000 inhabitants, maybe even 100,000, and has visions of grays and cloned long-eared workers teaching how to stimulate brain tissue by vibrations and flute music. They also create new life in many forms. There is also something about the breeding properties of all the races of mankind. Shortly afterwards Voltar gets Brian and his followers in trouble with Peruvian authorities. There is talk involving \$2000 in fraud. Rethinking things, Voltar's people leave in 1980. While the aliens still wanted that Tiahuanaco pyramid, they let Brian off the hook and said they only wanted him to grow in wisdom and write their history to be titled God's Other People.(Frazer 2002)

As recently as 2011, Vanity Fair reported on a little fiasco involving an Englishman named Julian Haynes who built a floating pyramid under the impetus of aliens met in a vision quest involving the psychedelic ayahuasca. Haynes was transported, he claimed, "to the center of the universe, to an alien assembly where outlandish life-forms, delegates of civilizations far in advance of our own, made speeches of vital importance." He was tasked to build a 7-storey pyramid in conformity to sacred geometry and esoteric tradition which would facilitate alien communication and double as a 37-room hotel. Some details were added in a trip to Cheop's pyramid. It is amazing the project ever got off the ground financially given the estimated cost of 2 to 3 million dollars but Haynes did get backing. Building the pyramid ran into troubles from the start. At the climax of the story, the 7-storey pyramid, floating on thousands of plastic bottles, is adrift on the Amazon as a fierce storm comes up and the pyramid is finally scuttled, abandoned on a sandbar.

(Mann 2011)

I accept this temple-building pattern may not warrant an adjective like robust. There are hundreds of alien experiences on record and most don't bear this feature of temple construction. Caveat in place, we still are seeing this associated with ufo-type phenomena in several cultures and across millennia of history. It feels acceptable to regard it a perennial facet of the ufo phenomenon.

I suppose contemporary ufologists could try to make a case that this bespeaks an external agent independent of Earthly culture having enough significance that it does have a physical impact upon humanity, i.e. physical structures that palpably touch the lives of thousands. Yet there is something paradoxical here. These are spiritual beings, by most accounts made of nothing more or less than light. Ultimately they are immaterial. Of what conceivable purpose could material structures have for immaterial spirits? They don't need them for protection from the elements. They don't need them to accrue wealth or status and make a living. Is it just disembodied ego?

Put it another way. The impulse to build sheltering structures probably confers a survival and reproductive advantage on the beings who possess it. Nest-building is perhaps an odd activity in the initial stages of activity, burning calories that could be better spent getting one's next meal. But ultimately the activity pays off in the future when the need for sheltering oneself and one's eggs against hostile weather becomes more relevant. For beings who must face storms and periods of cold temperatures, the desire to build structures is ultimately beneficial and reasonable. At times, the desire shades into seeming strangeness, the amazing ornateness of bower-bird nesting goes beyond the basic need for protection into displays for sexual attraction.

The architectural impulse in humans is fundamentally also rational, but civilization allows efflorescence of this creative drive into amazing monuments which go greatly beyond the basics of survival. That this drive can go completely off-the-rails is implicit in various housing construction bubbles seen in recent history. In the present tense, capitalism in China has spawned the looniest financial bubble in the history of the world, bigger than the tulipmania, bigger even than financial derivatives. The growing middle class there dumped all their savings into real estate compelled by the dream that the value of houses always goes up. The insane part is the houses are all too upper class. They have millions of people living in poverty that could use better housing, but they now have ghost cities of high class architecture that are completely empty and will remain empty. It is an insane use of time and money that could have done immense good if it had been spent wisely. As is, this building bubble is doomed to collapse and wreck their economy. Another road to hell paved by good intentions.

By this standard, the absurdities of people driven to build monuments at the request of ethereal beings who can't possibly benefit from their sheltering properties is a nearly trivial insanity. Probably, too, this impulse shades into the human wish to have something that will tell later generations we were here and want to be remembered. Often such monuments reach beyond realistic use of what one person can financially afford. The appeal to supernatural inspiration perhaps points to a common strategy to excite a communal response. I accept this does not require an intimate tie to the ufo phenomenon. Ufo phenomena does not cause one to build temples, but provides a handy opportunity to excuse indulging the more deeply perennial construction impulse. I am not dogmatic on this matter, there could be other explanations. It could be a desire for temples is tied to the ufo mystery because mystery worship loves company. Probably any constructivists reading this will begin a process to disprove this is truly perennial and should. I hope they succeed – build me a saucer-temple constructivism.

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Sandra L. Zimdars-Swartz Encountering Mary: From LaSalette to Medjugorje Princeton, 1991, p.51



A few months ago, Robert Sheaffer and I were exchanging e-mails about the Trent photographs. I had mentioned that I had taken some photographs with a digital SLR of an aluminum pie pan suspended by some fishing line. Some showed the thread but others did not. The sky was very clear and blue, which helped in providing contrast to expose the line. Robert suggested it would be an interesting test to see what color and size threads would show up under varying lighting conditions. As a result, I conducted a series of tests to see what exactly might be hidden under certain lighting conditions.

The test

Beside fishing line, I thought it might be best to test a variety of threads and lines under varying light conditions. I also decided to use four different cameras. This table identifies the different threads and cameras used:

Threads	Cameras
34 gauge beading wire	Samsung Fascinate Smart Phone 5 MP camera
White sewing thread	FUJIFINEPIXS5200 5.1 MP Digital camera
Black sewing thread	Pentax K110D 6.1 MP Digital SLR
Gray sewing thread	NIKON D5000 12.1 MP Digital SLR
Invisible sewing thread	
Mona filament fishing line	
Kite string	

The model was a simple Styrofoam bowl suspended underneath a pole. All photos were taken from an approximate distance of 14-15 feet and two photographs were taken of each setup. I used the widest angle lens setting on each camera and set the exposure time setting to automatic. In the case of the Digital SLRs, I took RAW images that would produced uncompressed images for greatest resolution.

Test results

My first attempt at this test was a shot of the evening sky with the bright western sky backlighting the model. The sky was mostly clear, with some cirrus, and the sun was obscured by my house. I was somewhat disappointed as the only thread that escaped scrutiny in the images was the fishing line. All cameras were unable to resolve it. The invisible thread escaped visual detection half the time in all the cameras except the Nikon, which resolved it in both shots. I attempted to locate the fishing line with Photoshop



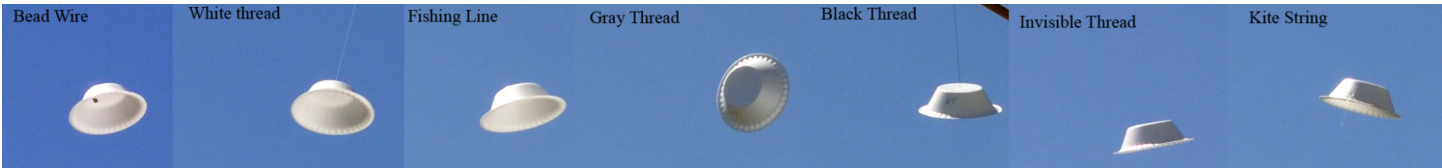
using the Nikon images. What I could possibly identify as the line, was faint/hard to detect and may not even have been the actual line.



Images taken with the Nikon D5000 for test #1. The fishing line is the only thread not visible.



My second attempt involved photographs taken with a clear blue sky in the afternoon (about 2PM local time). I was expecting similar results as the first test. However, I discovered that many of the threads were difficult to see. Along with the fishing line, the invisible and gray sewing threads were also not visible. I was also surprised to see the kite string being difficult to detect in the FujiFinePix and cell phone camera images.



Images taken with the Nikon D5000 for test #2. Several threads were not visible.

My third attempt involved a clear evening sky but I took the images looking eastward vice westward. This put the sun behind me the same way one might get from shooting west in the morning. The fishing line continued to do well but it failed when the FujiFinePix camera caught the sun glinting off the line. This did not show up in any of the other camera photographs. The invisible thread lived up to its name for most of the shots. It was visible in one Nikon and one cell phone camera image. Like the fishing line,



these appeared to become visible when the sun reflected off the thread. All the colored threads were visible as was the kite string and beading wire.



Images taken with the Nikon D5000 for test #3. The invisible thread and fishing line are not visible.

Preliminary conclusions

What these initial tests demonstrate is that threads can avoid detection if the lighting allows it. It appears that sunlight coming from a right angle to the camera is the best condition for hiding these threads. If the sun is in the same general direction as the photographer or behind the photographer, it will allow many threads to become easier to detect.

While these tests used a variety of digital cameras, it does not replicate the kind of images one might get from a film camera. Next issue, I plan on performing similar tests using black and white film and my old 35mm/Holga cameras. Before I do that, I will have to clean off all the dust.



A Blue Book SNAFU results in an identified "twofer"

On March 4th, I received an e-mail from Herb Taylor pointing out to me that it was the anniversary of one Blue Book "Unknown" that can't be readily solved. It involved multiple observers, who had seen three large elliptical objects near Dubuque, Iowa on March 4, 1960. Curious, I located the file at the fold3 web site¹ and told Herb I was not sure what the explanation was but some of the witnesses appeared to see them as aircraft.

PROJECT 10073 RECORD CARD			
1. DATE 4 March, 1960	2. LOCATION Dubuque, Iowa	12. CONCLUSIONS ☐ Was Balloon ☐ Probably Balloon ☐ Possibly Balloon ☐ Was Aircraft ☐ Probably Aircraft ☐ Possibly Aircraft ☐ Was Astronomical ☐ Probably Astronomical ☐ Possibly Astronomical ☐ Other ☐ Insufficient Data for Evaluation ☒ Unknown UNIDENTIFIED	
3. DATE-TIME GROUP Local 1755 GMT	4. TYPE OF OBSERVATION ☒ Ground-Visual ☐ Ground-Radar ☐ Air-Visual ☐ Air-Intercept Radar		
5. PHOTOS ☒ Yes ☐ No	6. SOURCE Civilian		
7. LENGTH OF OBSERVATION 4 minutes	8. NUMBER OF OBJECTS three	9. COURSE NNE	
10. BRIEF SUMMARY OF SIGHTING Elliptical objects, size of a quarter at arm's length, bright like a star first seen in the East travelling at approximately 200 mph at a distance of 5 miles. Climbing slightly, and just disappeared. The strip of film was given a thorough examination and nothing of an unusual nature nor anything such as described by the witness appeared in any of the frames. A check was made to determine the possibility of the objects being B-52 A/C and there were none in the area at the time. Witness location was three miles from a large river and the objects were on the other side of the river. There was a main highway between him and the river. Temperature was a cold 14° and the wind 14 kts. Possible that the witness saw a mirage, however this would have appeared on the film.		11. COMMENTS	

ATTC FORM 329 (REV 25 SEP 52)

Herb and I were shocked when we both looked closer at a document in the file that stated that flights of three B-52s were flying through the area on the very day the incident occurred. My first thought was that the times did not match and this is why Blue Book did not list this one identified. After converting the Zulu times to local and plotting it on Google earth, I began to realize that the B-52s were a very good match for what the witnesses saw.

Herb informed me that he had polled several UFOlogists about the case file. Meanwhile, I polled several skeptics but did not receive much of a response. Nobody seemed to find a reason to reject the explanation that these were simply aircraft. There seemed to be no good reason as to why Blue Book left this as an unknown. I have a couple of theories on why this happened but I think it would best to go over the case file so the reader can understand what transpired.

The sighting

On March 5th, 1960 the news media reported a sighting by a Dubuque, Iowa airplane instructor, Charles Morris, who saw three saucer-shaped objects flying at 200 mph at an altitude of 20,000 feet over the Mississippi river. According to the media account, he reported shooting 19 feet of film with his movie camera and that the objects were not aircraft or balloons. Morris felt the film would prove that flying saucers did exist.

What's This? Flying Saucers Over Iowa

DUBUQUE (UPI) — An airplane instructor says he saw flying saucers over Iowa Friday night. And he says he has proof.

At least they looked like flying saucers, Charles Morris, 31, said today.

Morris said he was watching a stunt plane perform over the Mississippi river at sundown when he spotted 3 silver, saucer-shaped objects whirling along at 200 miles an hour, about 20,000 feet up.

The objects didn't look like planes or weather balloons and left no vapor trails, Morris, a pilot for 14 years, said.

The instructor grabbed his movie camera and shot 19 feet of film of the mysterious objects. He gave the film to the federal government for processing and study.

Three other persons confirmed Morris' report, but the final proof, he said, is on the film.

More 'Flying Saucer' Data Under Study

DUBUQUE, Iowa (UPI) — Mysterious "flying saucers" spotted over the Mississippi River here last weekend attracted the attention Tuesday of Air Force intelligence officers. They said they were "very interested."

The three silver objects were spotted by flying instructor Charles Morris, 31, of Dubuque, while watching a stunt plane perform at dusk Friday night.

Air Force officials said Tuesday they were investigating reports of a mysterious stream of brilliant lights that flashed across the eastern part of the nation Monday night.

Reports of the lights came from pilots, control tower operators and state police all along the eastern seaboard from Lake Erie to Key West, Fla., but there was no indication that the phenomena here was connected with the latest reports.

Morris took 19 feet of film of the objects and turned the film over to the government. The processed film was not due to be returned until today.

Flying Saucers Or Meteor?

AF To Investigate Mysterious Lights

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (UPI) — Air Force officials today investigated a mysterious stream of brilliant lights that flashed across the eastern United States last night.

The Defense Department said in a statement the lights were seen as far north as Lake Erie and as far south as Key West, Fla.

Air Force officials in Washington said the lights were believed to have been caused by a meteor. But missilemen at Cape Canaveral said the lights "definitely looked" like a satellite might be expected to appear as it fell back to earth with the red-heat of air friction tearing it apart.

The National Space Agency in Washington confirmed that Launch III, the huge Soviet rocket that took

pictures of the far side of the moon, was expected to plunge into the earth's atmosphere this month.

However, officials at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Laboratory at Cambridge, Mass., which keeps track of satellites once they are launched, said they could not explain the lights, which triggered a flurry of "flying saucer" talk.

The flaming, colored lights were reported by airplane pilots, Air Force pilots, state police and control towers.

The air force said an operator in the airport control tower at Rossmore, Va., reported witnessing the object break into three pieces.

The lights moved generally in a broad arc from northwest to southwest. Missilemen at Cape Canaveral said the lights, through binoculars, appeared to be fast-moving balls of a molten substance, perhaps metal, falling apart.

A Winston-Salem, N. C., man reported spotting a very bright light followed closely by two smaller lights and another smaller light some distance behind that.

An air controller at the Raleigh-Durham, N. C., airport said the lights were visible at an extremely high altitude for 2 1/2 minutes and appeared to be moving in a steady formation.

"They were like a formation of jets with afterburners on," he said. "They left a vapor trail similar to that of jet aircraft."

The U. S. Weather Bureau in Raleigh said it also received a number of calls describing the lights. "It wasn't a comet," a spokesman said, "because a comet doesn't move that fast."



While this report received attention, another sighting took headlines a few days later when Discoverer 8 produced a display over the eastern United States. This event may have taken Blue Book's focus away from thoroughly investigating the Dubuque case.

Blue Book "investigates"

Blue Book seems to have had only a mild interest in the Dubuque, Iowa sighting. They essentially made just a few calls to see if any aircraft were in the area. According to the case file:

At 0900 EST 11 March 1960, Waverly AFS, Iowa was contacted regarding possible acft flights over Dubuque. The operations officer, Lt. Waddle, reported they had no record of B-52s flying around Dubuque on 4 or 10 March 60. Through the efforts of Lt Waddle, several other radar stations in the area were contacted with negative results.⁵

At this point, Blue Book could not identify the source of the UFO report and it was listed as "unidentified".

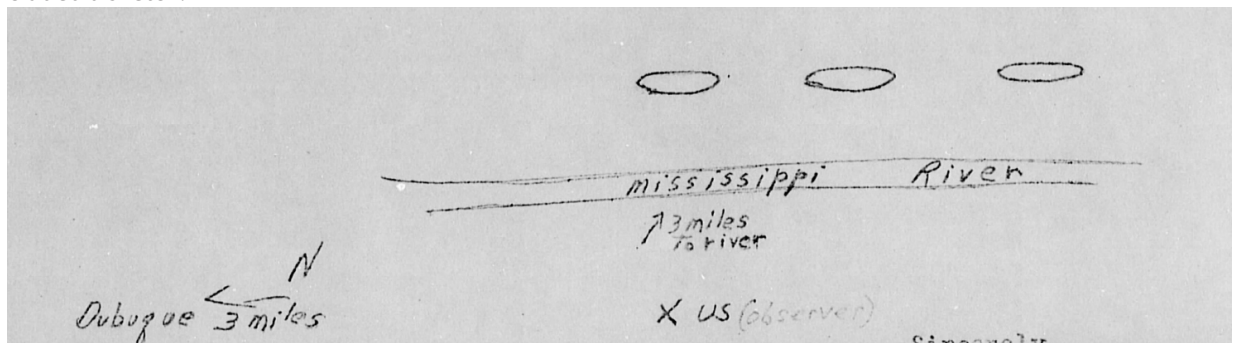
Despite the statements by Morris to the press, there seems to have been no effort by Blue Book to obtain his precious film. It was not until Charles Morris wrote a letter to Major Robert Friend on April 3rd, did he actually give the film to "officials". He clarified in the letter that he was mistaken that there was nineteen feet of film and there was only six feet. Morris described the sighting that he and his wife had made on March 4th:

On Friday March 4, 1960 at approximately 5:55 P.M. my wife and I at our home were watching a T-6 aircraft performing at approximately 2,000 feet when we saw three brightly, colored solid objects in line appear in the sky, traveling NNE. We saw them for approximately four minutes, and as they disappeared, seemed to be climbing very slightly.

The objects were about the size of a quarter, approximately 200 feet long, 60 feet thick, elliptical in shape, traveling approximately 200 miles an hour, and were about five miles from us. The objects were about 25 degrees above the horizon.

The objects did not give off smoke or any vapor trail, drop anything, change brightness, shape or color, did not explode, speed up or stand still at any time. The objects were sharply outlined and were like a bright star -- between the brightness of the moon and venus.⁶

He also included a sketch:⁷



On the 13th of April, Colonel Shoop sent the film to the analysis section of ATIC to see if they could find the UFOs on the film. On 19 April, they sent the film back, stating:

1. *Analysis of the film revealed nothing of an unusual nature nor anything as such described by Mr. Morris in his letter dated April 3, 1960.*
2. *It is suggested that Mr. Morris recheck his film and indicate which frames contain the three objects he refers to in his letter.⁸*

On the 27th, ATIC sent a memo to Major Tacker stating the same. He sent the film back to Morris on May 16th. The UFO sighting continued to remain "unidentified" in Blue Book's opinion.

Enter CUFOR

Probably the most interesting thing one can find in the case file is a report by a group calling itself Civilian UFO research (CUFOR) out of Chicago, Illinois. They conducted their analysis from March 28th to August 7th. It opens with the author of the report stating that this was a very confusing case.

What caused the confusion was the fact that the organization had declared the case as "unknown" on July 9th. This was apparently based on the report by Mr. Morris and a Mrs. H.V. Ludovissy. She had reported:

I looked, and going toward the NW in the sky, were three bright metallic objects; they were traveling VERY slowly, almost floating, THEY WERE NOT PLANES.....We watched for almost ten minutes, and, as we watched, one of them, the one in the middle, gave a flash, or white glow, and at the same time a puff of white smoke came from the back of it. The sun was setting in the west at the time, and I figured if it was the sun that made the flash, all three would have it; because they were so close together; but only the middle one had the glow.⁹

CUFOR appeared to be ready to close the book on this sighting, when they received more information about the case on July 29th. This information came from observations by more witnesses, who had also seen these UFOs. However, they reported they were actually large aircraft. According to CUFOR, Ferdinand Nesler of Dubuque, observing them in 7X50 binoculars, stated:

*I saw a group of three large aircraft, which appeared to be flying one behind the other at lower than usual jet altitude and at just medium speed. They were flying NNW, time 5:50 PM. I saw them not once, but three time within about 15 or 20 days always at the same time and place.*¹⁰

Another witness, Allan Jones, used 10X50 binoculars to make his observations:

*They were flying a rather loose formation on a course SE to NW. Their speed (slow) was the most unusual part of the whole affair. I could not determine the type, but aircraft they definitely were. I saw them several times after that (different days) and they were following about the same routine.*¹¹

He would add that he felt they were at 40,000 feet and reported an elevation angle of 75 degrees. He noted that the airplane's tails and contrails were like a B-52's. CUFOR added that there was an additional witness, who also saw these objects as airplanes.

CUFOR responded by making inquiries to various aircraft companies and Strategic Air Command (SAC) to see if they had any aircraft in the area. All the civilian companies gave a negative report but, on August 4th, CUFOR received a response from SAC that stated:

*Investigation here with our flight scheduling branch revealed that Strategic Air Command did have some 2-cells and 3-cell flights operating over Dubuque, Iowa for a 25 hour period which included 5:50PM on 4 March 1960. While we can not say definitely, it's highly possible that the sighting at the time could have been KC-135's or B-52's of this command.*¹²

This had CUFOR trying to rationalize what the witnesses actually saw. They put great weight in Morris' observations because he was a pilot and saw the objects "at rather close range" (even though the sketch showed the objects at least three miles away!). According to CUFOR, Morris stated they could not be jets because they moved too slowly. He also felt they could not be aircraft reflecting light because the intensity would change as they moved across the sky.

While CUFOR felt that the case involved aircraft, they chose to present the remote possibility that some of the witnesses actually saw three UFOs that happened to appear at the same time as three aircraft flying in the sky. In that scenario, all the witnesses would have missed the other three objects in the sky.

Credit goes to CUFOR for their investigation but it must be noted that, before they became aware of the aircraft witnesses, they were perfectly willing to call this unexplained based on the testimony of only two witnesses.

Blue Book gets the hint

CUFOR apparently sent a copy of their report to ATIC or ATIC became aware of it from another source. On the 22nd of August, ATIC responded to their findings. Colonel Evans seemed a bit upset about the charge that they did not identify these B-52s and considered the case to be "insufficient evidence". He pointed out that they had contacted radar stations and the air defense sector headquarters to look for such aircraft and received a negative response. He did admit that they had not contacted SAC but he seemed to feel it was unnecessary. He apparently could not understand how SAC's aircraft could avoid being recorded by the radar or noted by the Air Defense Sector's headquarters.

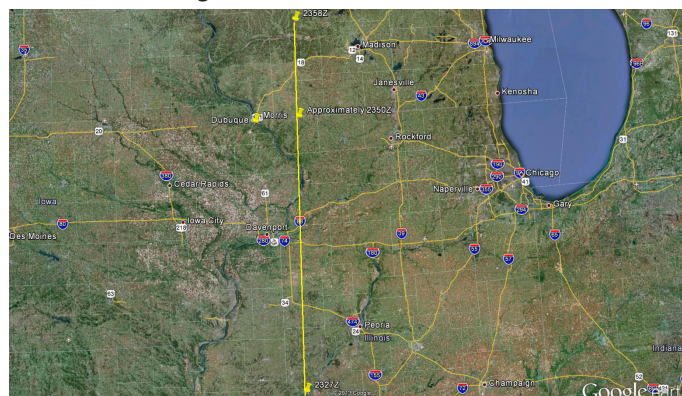
To ATIC's credit, they did not disregard the information and wrote to SAC headquarters on September 2nd:

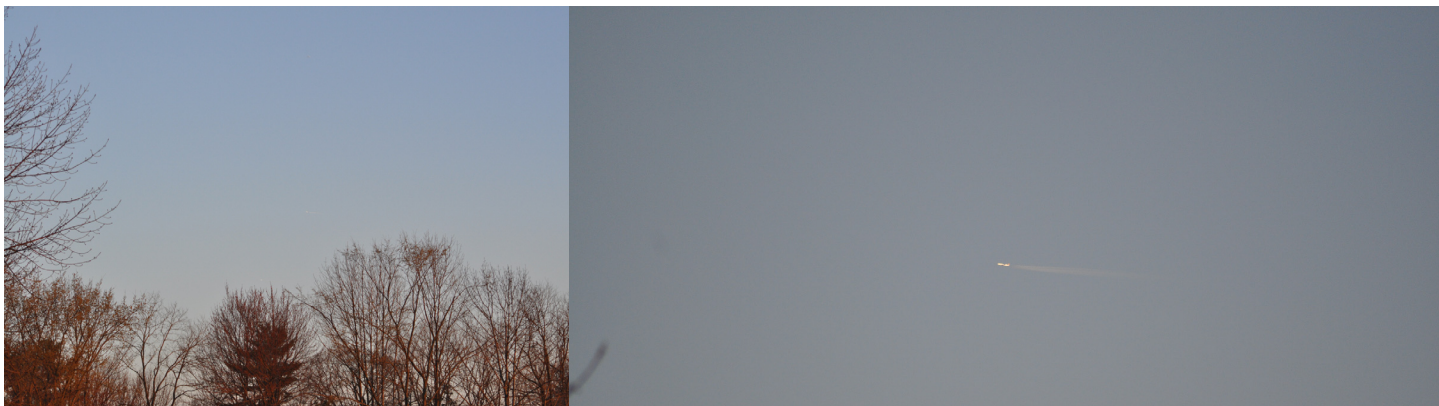
*The Air Force has been receiving queries concerning the possibility of SAC aircraft flying the Dubuque, Iowa area on the evening of 4 March 1960. Request all available information concerning such flights be forwarded to ATIC as soon as possible; i.e. number and type aircraft, altitude, time and direction of flight.*¹³

They also wondered if it was policy to notify the local radar units and the air defense sector when their units were flying through the area.

The B-52 cell flight

SAC responded to the query on the 29th of September stating that they had three B-52 cell flights (planes in groups of two or three) going north that passed east of Dubuque on three different occasions on March 4th.¹⁴ The most important "cell" flight occurred between the 2327 to 2358Z time frame. This is 5:27 to 5:58 PM CST, which includes the time of the actual sighting. Plotting the flight path on Google earth we see the following:





An airliner seen from a distance of about 28-30 miles. The image to the left was taken with a 70mm lens. The image to the right was taken with a 300 mm telephoto lens. If no contrail had been present, the planes would appear as described by the primary witness.

The actual distance between the witness and the aircraft was something like 25 miles. This would create an angular speed of about 16 degrees per minute, which accounts for the apparent slow speed of UFOs noted by the witnesses. At this distance, the angular size of the planes would have been pretty small for observers not using optical aid (see images above). The aircraft would probably appear to have no shape.

All of this seems to indicate that Blue Book had their explanation handed to them on a silver platter. Yet, for some reason the case remained “unidentified”.

A case forgotten or misplaced?

What happens next in the case file is really bizarre. About one year after discovering that the cause was a three plane cell of B-52s, Blue Book (Major Coleman) received a letter, dated 6 September 1961, from an individual asking about the case and what happened to the film. They had contacted Dr. Hynek asking him if he had seen the film. Dr. Hynek replied that he had not and he would like to do so. One would think Coleman’s office would look up the case file and see what was found. This apparently did not happen because Coleman would offer, on 13 September 1961, the following response:

....we do not know where such film is. We telephoned Mr. Morris and requested that he send the film for evaluation. We then wrote Mr. Morris requesting the film which he earlier promised. This was several months ago. We have not received the film as of this date.¹⁵

He added that would love to see the film. He seemed totally unaware that the film had been received, analyzed, and returned to Morris.

This response indicates that the case file was unavailable/lost/incomplete or Coleman’s office did not even bother to look this up before responding. It seems to have been a bureaucratic SNAFU. Could this be one of the reasons the case remain “unidentified”?

Upon reading the case file, I came to several reasons why the case remained on the list of unidentifieds:

1. Blue Book did not link the plane flights to the sighting because the record card and analysis sheet used local time while SAC listed Zulu times.
2. Blue Book personnel did not make the link to the plane flights and simply filed the SAC response in a bureaucratic mistake. This may have been the case as the record card makes no mention of SAC’s letter and appears to have been based on the earlier query to the Air Defense Command.
3. Blue Book felt that the B-52 explanation was inadequate. Considering how UFOlogists portray Blue Book’s “debunking”, this seems very unlikely.
4. Blue Book purposefully left this unexplained because the mission of the B-52s was classified. This seems unlikely because the document sent by SAC was not classified.
5. Blue Book purposefully left this unexplained to avoid publishing the fact that the radar network did not detect the B-52s or that the Air Defense Sector headquarters was completely unaware of flights in their zone.

I suspect there are other possibilities. Whatever the reason, Blue Book seems to have inadvertently left this on their list of unknowns.

The twofer

Interestingly enough, this case also finds a place in the UFO evidence document published by NICAP. While Blue Book seems to have ignored the explanation offered by SAC, NICAP ignored the solution offered by CUFOR. I doubt that NICAP would not have heard of CUFOR’s report. For an organization such as this to be unaware of other UFO group’s conclusions about UFO reports seems unlikely and CUFOR probably sent their investigation report to somebody in NICAP. Either NICAP was ignorant of the investigation or they purposefully chose to ignore its findings when they chose to produce their UFO evidence document.

I can see no reason to dismiss the possibility that these three B-52s were the cause of the sighting. As a result, we can eliminate this

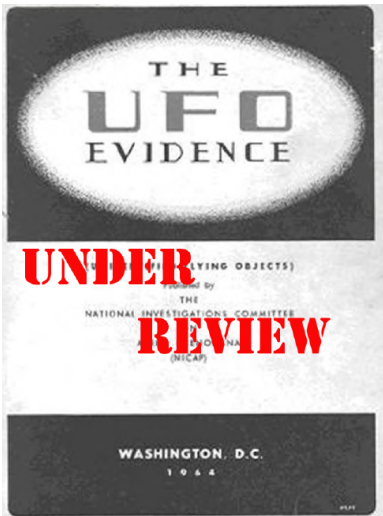
case from the various lists of unknown/unidentified UFO sightings.

I would like to thank Herb Taylor for pointing out the case to me and providing feedback as we examined the case file.

Notes and references

1. "Project Blue Book - UFO investigations". Fold 3 web site. Available WWW: <http://www.fold3.com/image/#6970713>
2. "What's this? Flying saucers over Iowa". Cedar Rapids Gazette. Cedar Rapids, Iowa. March 5, 1960. P. 9.
3. "More 'flying saucer' data under study". The Daily Telegram. Eau Claire, Wisconsin. March 10, 1960. P. 12.
4. "AF to investigate mysterious lights". The News Journal Radford, Virginia. March 8 1960. P. 1.
5. "Memo for the record". Fold 3 web site. Available WWW: <http://www.fold3.com/image/#6970771>
6. "Letter from Charles Morris to Major Robert Friend". 3 April 1960. Fold 3 web site. Available WWW: <http://www.fold3.com/image/#6970736>
7. *ibid.*
8. "Memo Wibur Price to Colonel R. R. Shoop - Subject: UFO film". 19 April 1960. Fold 3 web site. Available WWW: <http://www.fold3.com/image/#6970720>
9. "Civilian UFO research report on March 4, 1960 sighting." August 9, 1960. Chicago, Illinois. page 1. Fold 3 web site. Available WWW: <http://www.fold3.com/image/#6970797>
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13. "Request for information to SAC headquarters from Colonel Phillip G. Evans. 2 September 1960. Fold 3 web site. Available WWW: <http://www.fold3.com/image/#6970759>
14. "Letter from Strategic Air Command to Air Technical Intelligence Center". 29 September 1960. Fold 3 web site. Available WWW: <http://www.fold3.com/image/#6970766>
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January 4, 1954 - Quantico Virginia

The "UFO evidence" states the following about this case:

*January 4, 1954--Quantico, Va. Red revolving or blinking lights, hovering and moving soundlessly at tree-top height reportedly seen for six nights above Marine Corps base. [IV]*¹

Going to section IV, we read the following:

*Story broke this date that red-lighted UFOs had hovered, maneuvered over base for past six nights*²

The source of this story comes from the United Press with no other information being presented. There are no names or details available yet NICAP found it a significant case. Can one consider this "evidence" based on one newspaper clipping? What was so significant about this story that made it worthy of note?

The original story

I guess the reason that the UFO evidence lists this case is because there were reports of multiple witnesses, who were Marines. Marines are considered reliable and trustworthy but that does not guarantee they reported what transpired accurately. One must understand that the marines that normally stand sentry duty are the lowest ranking and youngest individuals, who might mistake something they were not familiar with as something extraordinary. My first thought about this was that they may have mistook stars scintillating as the tree-top objects. The idea that it was seen six nights in a row usually is an indication of something astronomical.

Since it was military, I figured Blue Book probably was involved. Checking the Fold 3 web site revealed that there was a file but the Blue Book record card was mistakenly dated 31 December 1959. However, the rest of the file comes from January 1954 and included the original story from the Washington Post of January 4, 1954.³ That story described two sentries, who reported the landing of a flying saucer to the Officer of the day. A helicopter was reported to have been sent to find the object and there were rumors of two platoons being sent to capture the flying saucer. The article also mentioned that "higher authorities" were investigating the case.

While this all sounds very interesting, it seems to be the sole source of information that NICAP chose to use as a reference in their document. Like some of the other NICAP cases that I have mentioned in the past, there was an explanation that appeared in the news papers just a few days later that NICAP either missed or ignored.

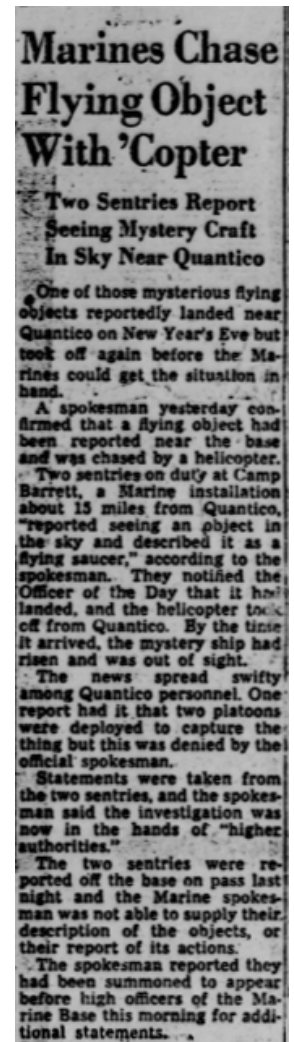
Grimes lighting

The Blue Book file has an interesting document that demonstrates that the higher authorities running the investigation were from the USAF and the base Public Information Officer (Major Ferguson) at Quantico. Since the UFOs had appeared over the previous three nights, Major Glasebrook from intelligence, went to Quantico on the evening of the fourth to see what the fuss was about.

BB described what transpired:

*At 1945 hours a Marine corporal reported that the phenomena was appearing again. Maj. Glasebrook and Maj. Ferguson went outside and observed a flashing red light which appeared in the north and passed over the northeast section of the Danger area in southeasterly direction. It was rapidly apparent that this was a Grimes Beacon on a commercial air liner as Maj Glasebrook could see both wing tip identification lights at one time, in addition to the Grimes Beacon.*⁴

On January 5th and 6th, numerous papers published a story stating the Marines had solved the mystery.⁵ The article in the Washington Evening Star had the most information.⁶ Apparently, airliners had installed a new flashing red light, called a Grimes light, on them. The young Marines on sentry duty, as well as some sergeants/corporals, were unaware of this lighting and it confused them into thinking they were seeing a flying saucer instead of an airplane.



NICAP drops the ball.....again

For an organization that promoted the idea that UFOs were being covered up by the government and Air Force, it sure looks like NICAP was just as guilty of "covering up". Either they chose not to read any stories that appeared after the initial sighting or they simply refused to admit that there was a rational explanation. This means they were incompetent or deceptive. I guess it is a case of the ends justifying the means. By ignoring or not mentioning the solutions, they could pad their document with a whole bunch of cases that others would simply accept as proof of alien visitation. However, the inclusion of such weak cases indicates that they were blinded by their beliefs instead of examining each case critically.

Notes and references

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2. Ibid. P. 31.
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4. "Internal memo ATIC by Major Willis R. Loehr dated 7 January 1954". *Fold 3 web site*. Available WWW: <http://www.fold3.com/image/#6779280>
5. "Marines explain red lights seen at Quantico base". *The Southwest times*. Pulaski, Virginia. January 5, 1954. P. 1.
6. Jones, Jack. "Marines seeking flying saucer find new aviation light". *Washington evening star*. January 5, 1954. P. B-1. Available WWW: <http://www.fold3.com/image/#6779303> and <http://www.fold3.com/image/#6779305>

Marines Explain Red Lights Seen At Quantico Base

'Saucer' Reports Laid To Airliners

QUANTICO, Va. (AP)—Officials at the Quantico Marine Base have come up with a solution to the mysterious flashing red lights observed in the air near this reservation on recent nights.

The conclusion is that the lights are new navigational lights—and collision lights—now being installed on most commercial airliners.

Unusual Effect

"When seen for the first time by the unaided eye, the light creates an unusual impression that an illusion of nearness," a base spokesman said.

A group of base officials watched the airways bordering this reservation for several hours last night. On two occasions they observed "at a considerable distance moving along the airways" flashing red lights such as had been reported seen by Marine sentries on five nights.

Appear To Stand Still

Civil Aeronautics Administration officials earlier had said the lights probably were the new navigational lights and could easily be mistaken for "flying saucers."

One CAA official said the lights, when a considerable distance away often appear to be standing still. The lights are similar to those used on some fire vehicles, with high-intensity beams flashing from a red plastic dome. They can be seen from as far as 30 miles away. They are mounted atop a plane's tail or fuselage, and are in addition to the regular position lights used in the past.

Marines Seeking Flying Saucers Find New Aviation Light

By Jack Jones

Star Staff Correspondent

QUANTICO, Va., Jan. 5.—The Marines looked for flying saucers last night and saw weather balloons, airplane lights and stars.

Intelligence officers, armed with high-powered night binoculars, scanned the skies above the Marine base for three hours. They were there because for the past five nights sentries reported seeing strange lights in the sky.

The verdict: The sentries had indeed seen something strange to them, but it was merely recently installed powerful anti-collision lights on commercial aircraft.

Today, the sentries were to be briefed on the latest developments in night flying.

Pvt. Norman Viets of Greenville, Pa., a sentry on duty at the Tank Park in Camp Barrett, a few miles from the main base, spotted the oddity first. That was on December 30 at 9:05 p.m.

"It looked like a big, flashing red light," Pvt. Viets said. "I would have thought it was an airplane, but I couldn't hear any motor noise."

Called for Sergeant.

He called for Sgt. Francis R. Salinder, the sergeant of the guard, and together they watched the lights.

"It just looked like a big red light to me," Sgt. Salinder said.

The next three nights, Pfc. Harrison J. Bennett, another sentry, saw the strange objects. And, oddly, he saw them first at the same hour, 9:05 p.m.

Pvt. Bennett saw two lights Thursday night. One traveled toward the southwest, and the other toward the northeast.

"They seemed to hover together for a while," he said. "Then one disappeared, and the other moved away from the spot and finally disappeared."

At 6:40 p.m. Friday, Pvt. Bennett saw them again. The same thing happened Saturday night, this time at 7 p.m. and 7:57 p.m.

Then Sunday night, Sgt. Harlan Young saw them at 6:40 p.m., 8:48 p.m., 8:54 p.m. and 9:20 p.m. "They seemed to be about 2,000 yards in the sky, and pretty close," he said.

And so last night, Maj. John Shearer, of the intelligence unit, and Maj. D. D. Pomerleau, the provost marshal, were on hand. "You can expect them at 6:40," some one said positively.

At 6:40 p.m., there was a shout: "There it is!"

The shout brought Maj. Shearer, Maj. Pomerleau, reporters and photographers in a rush outside.

A faint, flashing red light glowed in the sky toward the southeast, near the horizon. Maj. Shearer trained his binoculars on it.

"I can see something," he said. Later: "It looks a little like an airplane."

And still later: "Now I can see his navigational lights, too."

See Weather Balloons.

At 7:45 p.m., there was another shout from outside. Maj. Shearer went to work with his glasses again. These lights seemed to rise from the horizon almost directly upward.

"Weather balloons," Maj. Shearer said.

A few minutes later, some one spotted another blinking light. The experts said that one was a star.

At 8:15 p.m., the shout went up again.

The flashing red light this time followed an orderly course from the northeast toward the southeast, just above the horizon. Even to the naked eye, airplane navigational lights also were visible.

Maj. Shearer did some telephoning to the Civil Aeronautics Authority in Washington and asked for more information about the light.

This light, he reported later, is being installed on commercial aircraft because of higher speeds of today's airplanes. The light, known as the Grimes Beam, is of 50,000 candlepower and can be seen at a greater distance by other pilots.



Red flashing airplane lights are common in many of my wide field astrophotographs taken low in the sky. This photo of comet Panstarrs was ruined by an airplane that crossed the field of view.

The 701 Club

Case # 636 - July 26, 1952

The Blue Book record

NICAP describes the case as:

Kansas City, Missouri. 12:15 a.m. Witnesses: USAF Capt. H. A. Stone, men in control towers at Fairfax Field and Municipal Airport. One greenish light with red-orange flashes was seen for 1 hour as it descended in the northwest from 40 elevation to 10* elevation¹*

The blue book file is a bit more informative as the Air intelligence report states:

On 26 July 1952, at approximately 0015 hours XXXX observed an airborne object above Kansas City, Missouri. He (XXXX) then notified the dispatcher, Fairfax field, Kansas City, Kansas, of his observation. The dispatcher subsequently notified the tower operators of the Fairfax and Municipal Airports of the incident, who also saw the object.²

The witness, using 6X30 binoculars, made his own report:

At approximately 15 minutes past midnight my wife called my attention to what appeared to be an unusually bright star in the western sky. I observed this object through binoculars for about 10 minutes and then notified the dispatcher at Fairfax Field, Kansas of what I was looking at and it's (sic) location. I continued to keep the object under observation with the binoculars until approximately 15 minutes past one o'clock A.M. At this time it had apparently sunk so low on the horizon I could no longer keep it in view.³

He also gave a chronological statement of events:

First observed 0015 26 July 1952

Location. WNW from observer at angle of about 40 degrees from horizontal.

Shape. Indeterminate, appeared to be round more than anything else.

Color. Predominately greenish with intermittent red orange flashes shooting out from edges in all directions.

Size. Unknown, but gave the impression of being quite large.

Altitude. Unknown, but based on intensity of lights would estimate 35,000 to 40,000 feet.

Speed. Took about one hour to cover 30 degrees of arc in the sky.

Course. Appeared to travel in a Northwesterly direction, with no apparent loss of altitude or change of speed.

Last observed. 0115 26 July 1952, NNW from observer at an angle of about 10 degrees from the horizontal.⁴

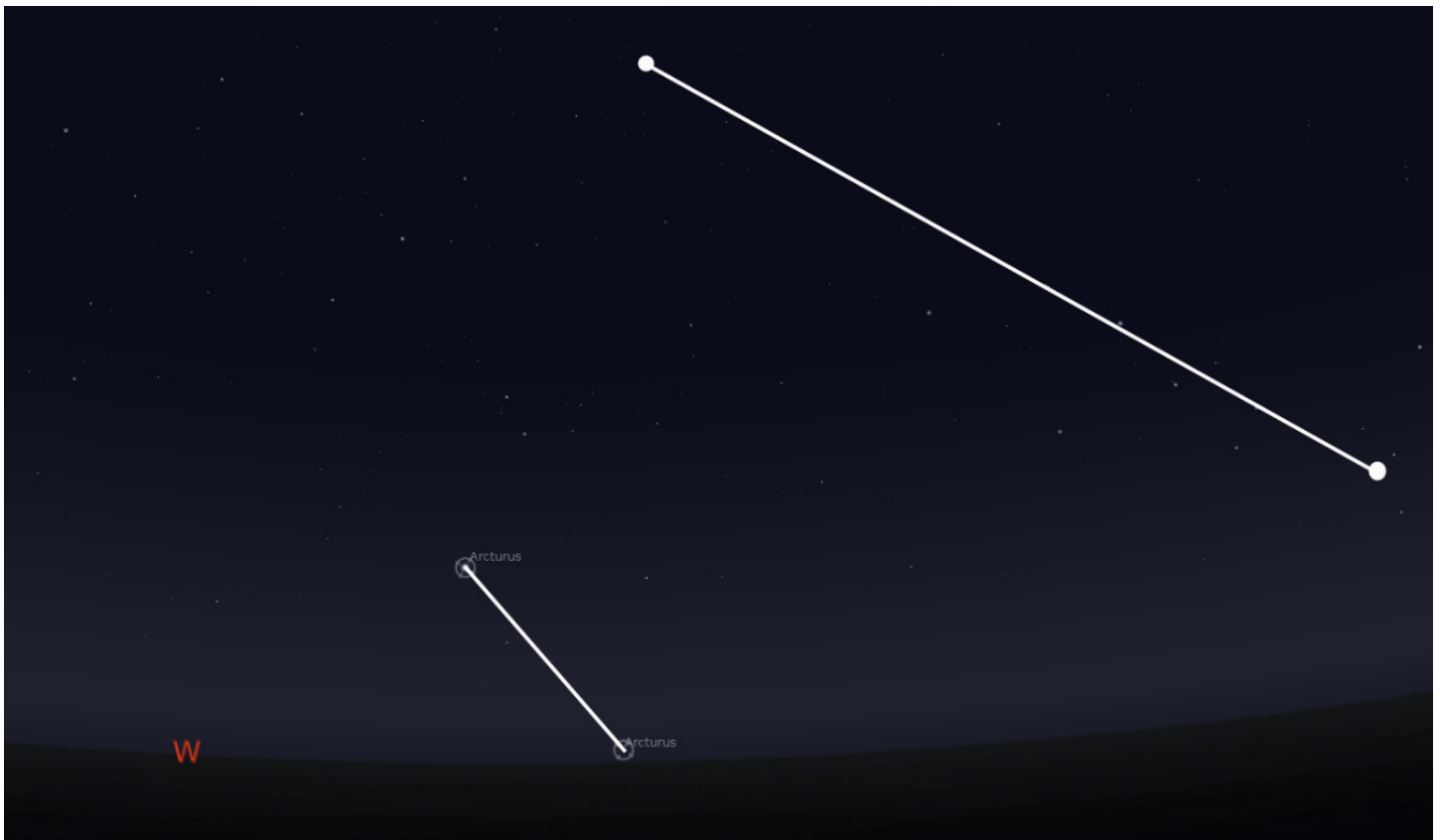
At the end of this report, the witness made the following comment:

Wish to emphasize that estimates of size and altitude given above are unreliable due to lack of adequate data on which to accurately judge. They are purely guesstimates.⁵

Is it possible that his "guesstimates" prevented Blue Book from determining the source of this UFO?

CST or CDT?

One of the items that always bothers me about these reports is when they don't designate a time zone or do not use Zulu time. In 1952, daylight savings time was not used nationwide and one can never be sure who was using it and who was not. According to internet sources, Missouri employed CDT in 1952, which would seem to answer the question. However, I checked further and examined a few local newspapers in Missouri. They listed sunset as being around 7:30 PM, which was standard time. Additionally, I examined several 1952 Blue Book cases from Missouri. When a local time was listed, it was listed as CST and not CDT. This implies that the witness was giving CST as his time zone.



The actual motion of Arcturus (bottom left) for the time period compared to what the witness reported based on his azimuths and elevations.

A possible solution

When this case was first brought to my attention, I saw the times and locations and wondered if it were a bright star that was setting. So, I started with a looking at the sky conditions using Stellarium. There was a bright star in the sky at the time setting in the WNW. Arcturus (magnitude 0), at 0015 local time, was at an azimuth of 286 degrees and 12 degrees elevation. At 0115, the star was at 295 degrees azimuth and 1 degree of elevation. It is interesting to note that, at the time the UFO was last seen, Arcturus had essentially set. This appeared to be a potential solution to this case.

Reasons for rejection

The explanation might be rejected based on the witness' estimates of elevation and azimuth. He states that the object was originally in the WNW (azimuth 290) and disappeared in the NNW (azimuth 340). This is a difference in azimuth of 50 degrees. Arcturus only changed direction by about 10 degrees. The difference of elevation was 30 degrees of arc (40 to 10 degrees). Arcturus only changed elevation by roughly 10 degrees.

Another reason to reject the explanation is the apparent color of Arcturus is orangish-red to most observers (It is classified as a K-type star). While the observer stated there were intermittent flashes of red-orange, the dominant color he observed was green.

Witness errors?

In the argument concerning angles of elevation and azimuth, the changes were greater than the motion of Arcturus. However, we have to remember that the witness was making, in his own words, "guesstimates". We don't know how accurate he was in making these estimates. People can, and do, make errors when determining directions and angles of elevation. According to several articles I read, many observers tend to overestimate angles of elevation.

Writing about meteor plots, J. Hugh Pruett once wrote:

From tests once made on 50 persons, we found that 95 per cent estimate angular altitudes too high, most of them far too high.....⁷

In the Condon report, we read the following comment:

The angular elevation, or apparent location above the horizon, of objects is generally not estimated very accurately at all. The difference from 0° or from 90° of angles near the horizon or near the zenith tends to be substantially overestimated. Anything that is more than 45°

or even 30° above the horizon is often reported as overhead.⁸

M. Minnaert wrote:

*We estimate as well as we can, the direction in which the centre of the arc joining the zenith to horizon appears to lie. When this estimated centre is checked, it turns out not to lie at a height of 45 degrees, but much lower, mostly at heights from 20 degree to 30 degrees; values as low as 12 degree or as high as 45 degrees have been given, though rarely.*⁹

If a witness thinks 20-30 degrees is actually 45 degrees, they are going to overestimate angles of elevations. This does not mean that all observers overestimate angles but it does indicate that there is a tendency for people to do so. There also may be a clue in the witness' statement that he was mistaken about his angle of elevation estimates. He claimed 10 degrees above the horizon was when the object became too low to see. In my opinion, this estimate was probably too high, which means the initial estimate was probably inaccurate to a similar degree. If we consider that the point it got too low as 3-5 degrees and apply that same factor (2-3X) to the initial sighting, we have a value of more like 13-20 degrees for the initial sighting, which is pretty close to the value of 12 degrees, where Arcturus was located.

If the elevation angles were off, couldn't the azimuth be off as well? This would not be unusual based on what some investigators have reported. Allan Hendry wrote in his UFO Handbook:

*I was always surprised to encounter adults at or near their own homes who couldn't locate north, south, east, and west even though they may have lived in the area for years. I was able to prod them with guidelines, like where the sun rises or where it sets or what direction the street they live on runs. I had to worry at times about whether witnesses were actually describing the correct direction of, say, a stationary light source when all the other characteristics described except the direction led to the conclusion of "Venus."*¹⁰

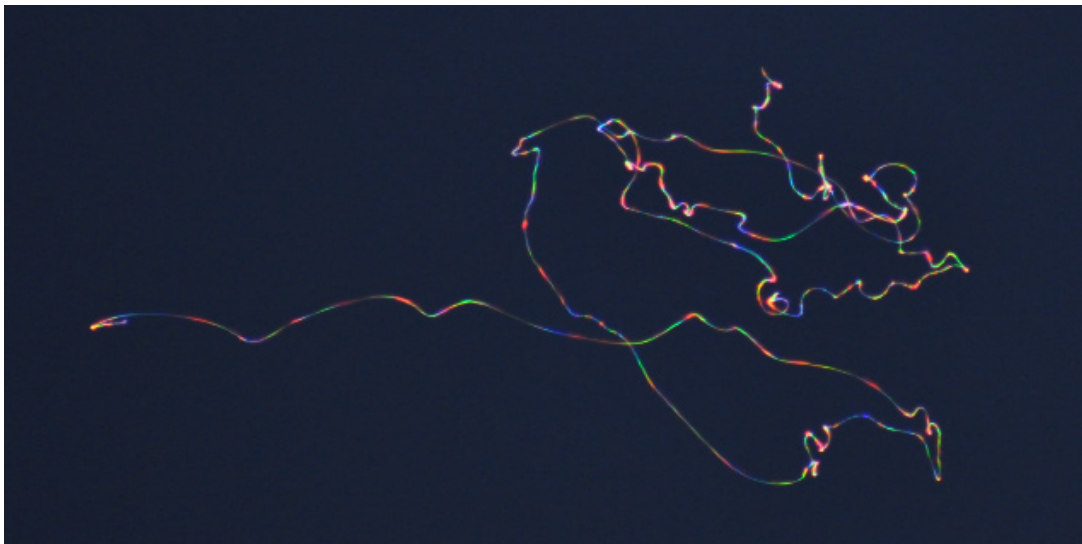
UFOlogist John Keel also commented about this:

*Early in my own investigations I discovered that the average witness could not even pinpoint true north- even when he or she had lived in the area all their life. It is common for a witness to say that the object appeared in the east, say, and travelled to the south west when actually I found that it had appeared in the west and travel north east!*¹¹

Writing about fireball reports, Hal Povenmire also encountered this problem:

*It is surprising how many people do not know North from South, or even which way the house that they live in faces. In the mail, a large number of people will send you some sort of a map indicating what they saw. Many of these will show that they did see an object and spend a lot of time constructing the map but the map tells nothing of value for it lacks pertinent information.*¹²

The other reason for rejection is the statement by the witness that the UFO was "predominately greenish...."¹³ While Arcturus appears orangish-red to most observers, it is plausible that it can appear green under certain conditions. The lower the elevation angle, the more likely a star will scintillate causing its color to rapidly change.

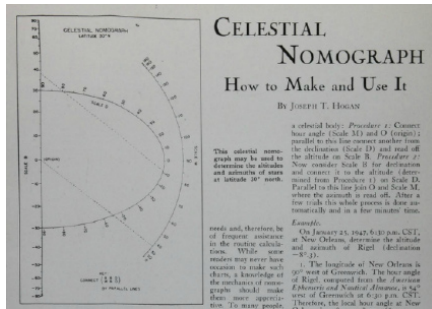


I recently took a handheld image of the star Arcturus when it was 10-15 degrees above the horizon. Exposure time was eight seconds and I purposefully moved the camera about so the various colors displayed would be visible in the trailing images. Notice that the color green, as well as blue and red, does appear quite frequently. One could make a case that the predominant color was green under these conditions.

The one thing that can not be ignored in all of this is the fact that Arcturus had essentially set at the same time the witness lost sight of this UFO because its angle of elevation had gotten too low. This indicates that it needs to be considered as a potential explanation.

Why didn't Blue Book solve this one?

There are two possible reasons Blue Book did not seem to consider Arcturus as the potential solution. The first had to do with when this sighting was made. This was the same time frame as the Washington DC sightings. There probably was no time to examine this case closely and it was probably put into the “unexplained” pile because nobody could figure out what it was after initial examination. The potential errors in elevation/azimuth estimates probably compounded the issue.



One has to remember that Blue Book did not have any sophisticated computer programs to determine the precise locations of astronomical objects. The individuals attempting to identify these reports probably used a nomograph with an astronomical almanac (left)¹⁴ or a planisphere (right) to get approximate positions of celestial objects. In both cases, there is a margin for error, which could make identification difficult when coupled with inaccurate estimates made by witnesses.

Solved?

Without more information one can't draw any definitive conclusions. It would have been nice to have reports from the witnesses at Fairfax field, who stated they saw the object as well. I could not find any such reports in the blue book archive or Fold 3 web site. If they filed any reports, they probably were lost in the shuffle. If we make the assumption that this witness was not 100% accurate in his directions and angles of elevations, the star Arcturus becomes a probable source for this report. I would not call it positively “identified” but, in my opinion, the classification of this case should be changed from “unidentified” to “possibly Arcturus”. It certainly does not appear to have been any exotic craft.

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UFOs on the tube

Alien Mysteries: "Stephenville"

The show began with recounting the UFO sightings that happened in January 2008. The portrayal of Steve Allen's sighting was highly exaggerated in my opinion and did not reflect the written report he made to NUFORC back in January 2008. He even stated that he sped home because he felt it might be "the end times". Allen, once again, floated out the fact that he is a "pilot". UFO statistics have shown that his experience as a private pilot does not make him any more reliable than any other person. The same can be said for constable Gaitan, who was the other witness mentioned on the program. This became evident when they showed a video Gaitan took of a UFO that he saw one night for over 15 minutes that moved slowly from east to west. The video appears to be an out of focus star that was scintillating.

There was much made about the radar data evaluated by Robert Powell. Powell stated there were three UFOs in the radar data between 6:00 and 9:30 PM. This appears to confirm the story told by Allen but that is not exactly accurate. Only one contact came from the time period of the Allen sighting and this was probably the weakest of all the UFOs in the radar data. MUFON took two contacts and drew a line between them and concluded these weak signals were the path of the UFO sighted by Allen. They did not mention the fact that there were only two points and no other contacts before or after this verifying these two points were not simply noise like some of the other random contacts that appear on their plot. Also missing was the fact that no UFO being pursued by F-16s was recorded. It was not very scientific at all but this is MUFON, where the rules of science are often discarded in favor of a desired conclusion.

Powell's approach to the subject was best demonstrated by two statements he made near the end of the program. He started his conclusions by stating, "It doesn't mean that it was an extra-terrestrial object". However, Powell would then let his guard down and contradict himself by stating a few seconds later, "What I can say is it was not anything manufactured on Earth"! Apparently, Powell is allowing his beliefs, not science, to draw his conclusions.

Steve Allen appeared to be influenced by his beliefs as well when he recounted a telephone call he received from Edgar Mitchell. According to Allen, Mitchell told him he saw unknown craft during his Apollo 14 mission and the Buzz Aldrin saw a UFO land on the moon! Edgar Mitchell has never told this story publicly and Aldrin denies ever seeing a UFO during his Apollo 11 mission. Did Mitchell tell Allen these stories or did Allen hear what he wanted to hear?

The show ended with a bizarre story about a UFO that appeared at a high school football game that fall. According to the program, the game stopped and everyone saw the UFO. Strangely, no videos of this UFO have ever appeared in the public domain. I checked the NUFORC database and could not find any mention of this. I did find a story on the UFO Chronicle's web site that fit the description.....sort of. Contrary to what the show portrayed, the actual event was seen by a few people and the game did not stop. What was seen was not a "craft" but some lights that flickered on and off. Not surprisingly the witnesses were looking west towards the Brownwood Military Operating Area where seven F-16s were conducting air operations that night. This was never mentioned by the program.

The program was full of highly exaggerated representations of what actually happened. What was initially seen by Allen probably was one of the flight of F-16s that flew over Stephenville that night. His belief in the supernatural affected his interpretation of what he saw. The program repeated the typical UFO propaganda of cover-up, alien spaceships, and "I know what I saw" claims that can not be confirmed. Not a single skeptical argument was presented or discussed. Don't waste your time.

Buy it , Borrow it, or Bin it!

True UFO accounts: From the vaults of Fate magazine by David Goodwin

I saw this in the Amazon Kindle store and expected to read some UFO stories that I had never seen before. I was disappointed because it was more of the same old stuff.

I found the pre-history section the most interesting as it recounted old stories that may or may not have any merit. UFOlogists love to interpret these incidents as ET but I see different possibilities. The highlight of this section was Kevin Randle's article about the 1897 Aurora crash being a hoax.

The Roswell section involved Stanton Friedman recounting his work on the case and John Keel suggesting what had been found was a FUGO balloon. I really did not find this very informative.

Some of the stories about close encounters were very interesting recaps of some famous cases like Zamora and Father Gill. However, I could not understand the inclusion of the article written by "Professor" George Adamski. I assume this was included for "historical" reasons.

Some of the speculation section was a bit on the extreme side as various individuals speculated about the UFO question. The article written by Moseley and Pflock was probably the best of them. Moseley suggested that UFOs were "extra-dimensional" while Pflock argued the ETH. I disagree with both opinions but respect them. I just want more evidence.

The article in chapter five, about an underwater UFO base off the Southern California coast, seemed to be mostly wishful thinking. Just because one can collect a bunch of UFO stories from a highly populated area, which has a lot of ship/air traffic, does not mean there is an underwater UFO base nearby. Preston Dennett offers no real evidence for this claim.

While I was disappointed with the book's limited content, I did find it worth reading once. This is a borrow it book.